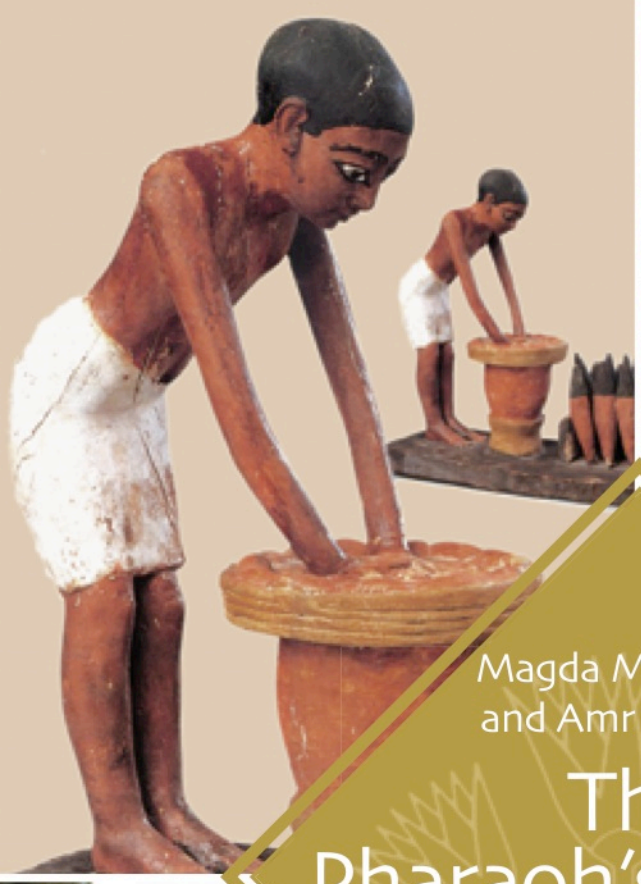

Magda Mehdawy
and Amr Hussein

The Pharaoh's Kitchen

Recipes from
Ancient Egypt's
Enduring Food
Traditions

The
Pharaoh's Kitchen

Magda Mehdawy
Amr Hussein

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Dedicated to the eminent Egyptologist Abd El Halim Nour El Din, whose support and knowledge were a huge help in putting this book together. His wise opinions and sound advice have guided us throughout this project. We cannot thank him enough for his immense support and passion for knowledge.

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Foreword

While ancient Egyptian civilization is best noted for its architecture, its elaborate temples and tombs, and arts and sculpture, there are other aspects of ancient Egyptian society that have been far less studied. The culture of food and drink—which entails the methods of preparation and consumption, kitchen planning and tools, as well as references in literary and other texts—is among those more obscure facets of the pharaonic era.

Food and drink are necessities of life and therefore an important area of research. The habits of the past are of the utmost relevance in the continuing habits of the present, and our knowledge of the aspects of food and drink still lacks a great deal of depth. Herein is the importance of this book. Magda Mehdawy and Amr Hussein's *The Pharaoh's Kitchen* offers a collection of modern-day recipes that have evolved from pharaonic cooking techniques and ingredients. Despite the abundant depictions of food and food preparation found on pharaonic walls and reliefs, the ancient Egyptians did not leave behind any recipes, making it difficult, if not impossible, to identify the methods of food preparation and dining etiquette of their civilization.

This book is an absorbing and serious attempt to investigate and develop the scant information about food and drink that has been passed on to us

from the ancients. The authors' findings are drawn from their own research of ancient Egyptian texts and images, classic references in literature, as well as their own extensive experience in this field. I would like to commend the authors for their worthy addition to the research of ancient Egyptian culture, and fully anticipate that *The Pharaoh's Kitchen* will receive the appreciation and applause that it deserves.

Abd El Halim Nour El Din
Professor of ancient Egyptian language,
Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University

Preface

Ancient Egyptian cooking is a subject that has inspired readers to find out more about the different dishes that make the Egyptian kitchen—ancient and present—unique. Exploring this topic is as challenging as it is interesting. But while there may exist many depictions and images on temples and tomb walls that describe in detail the pharaonic home and kitchen, as well as the kinds of foods offered on almost all occasions from the dawn of the Predynastic era, the ancient Egyptians did not leave behind any recipes. As such it remains difficult, as one can imagine, to specify weights, measurements, and methods of preparation with any clear precision.

Due to the specific cultural heritage of each area, ways of cooking may differ from one place to another, helping to individualize that region despite the similarity of ingredients. In Lower Egypt, or the Delta, for example, there has been a consecutive influence of Greeks and Romans, foreign immigration, the Islamic invasion, and the Ottoman invasion. All of these have directly impacted food and cooking habits as well as recipe variations, and the modern Egyptian kitchen in this region is the outcome of these influences.

But this has not been the case with southern Egypt (Upper Egypt and Nubia), where cooking methods and ingredients have likely remained

unchanged since the days of the pharaohs due to the relative lack of foreign influences in the area. Very early on in the project it quickly became apparent that cooking methods in Upper Egypt and Nubia—regions that have always been strongly insular, adhering closely to ancient cultures and inherited traditions—have retained a pharaonic influence in their simplicity, their tendency to use few ingredients and spices, and their preference for vegetables, grains, spices, and herbs indigenous to the region. Two years of research into ancient Egyptian texts and tomb and wall reliefs depicting food preparation, cooking tools, and ingredients have found that today's southern Egyptian cuisine is likely the closest to traditional Egyptian food prepared in the kitchens of the pharaohs.

As noted earlier, the ancient Egyptians left few if any recipes, so the ingredients in this book have been slightly modified to suit modern tastes. While certain foods were not introduced into Egypt until after the pharaonic age (including sugar, lemon, tomatoes, chicken, and chilli, among others), they have found their way into the modern-day southern Egyptian kitchen.

The Pharaoh's Kitchen has been compiled with the aim of thoroughly exploring ancient Egyptian cooking, from both historical and social perspectives. We sincerely hope that it will provide clear, simple, and useful information for interested readers.

Chapter 1
Food in Ancient Egypt

Home and Kitchen

Pharaonic Homes

Ancient Egyptian houses differed according to the social and economic class of their residents, ranging from small, basic structures for peasants and laborers to more elaborate homes for artists, priests, and men of state, villas for nobles, and palaces for kings.

Ancient Egyptians lived in simple houses made of mudbrick, the structure of which varied according to social status. At al-Bersha, house models, called 'storehouses,' were found that indicated three-story homes with separate outdoor facilities, like silos, to store grain, as well as places for weaving and making beer and furniture.[1] Houses of laborers in Tell al-Amarna built in the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty (the New Kingdom) usually consisted of four halls starting with a corridor leading to a living room followed by a bedroom, then a kitchen. Remains were also discovered of a bigger house containing nine rooms that included a living room in the middle. Besides the many rooms, the house contained storehouses for grains and food. Another type of house, found in Deir al-Medina in Luxor, had been specifically designed for laborers, artists, and foremen working on the tombs of the west bank. Built of brick, these houses typically consisted of a

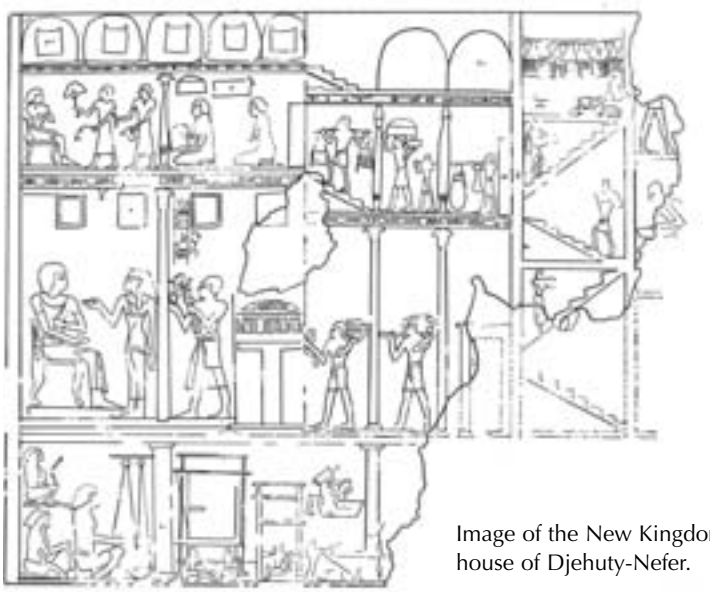


Image of the New Kingdom house of Djehuty-Nefer.

reception area and a sitting room, behind which a flight of stairs would lead to the roof, and a bedroom followed by a hall leading to the kitchen. In most cases there was also a room under ground for storage.[2]

A depiction of a house belonging to the nobleman Djehuty-Nefer dating to the New Kingdom shows a three-story house. The bottom floor lies mostly underground and appears to have been used for storage with rooms for servants to perform different tasks such as grinding grain. The floors above were for the owner and contained sitting rooms and bedrooms. This relief, which is currently on display at the Louvre Museum, proves that it was not rare for the bottom floor to lie at some depth below the ground.[3] Big houses during the New Kingdom were typically two-story structures, with outdoor facilities such as a storehouse and a silo for grains, all surrounded by a fence with two gates. The main gate would be located right outside the house, and the other smaller one would lead to the outbuildings. The house would have a garden with a few trees, and some might contain a bench for the owner and his wife, and perhaps a small pond to attract birds. If the pond was big, there may have been a boat for pleasure rides.[4]

Roofs were usually flat and could be reached by fixed stairs, or by ladders. Some homeowners built silos on the roofs. Other country homes, like that

of the nobleman Nebamun, had a small building in the middle of the garden for the owner to receive guests.[5]

Houses of priests, civil servants, and soldiers found near Ramesses III's funerary temple in Medinet Habu were built in parallel rows and with a great deal of similarity. Some had a backyard and a row of columns. On one side was a hall, a large living room, and two bedrooms. On the other was a large storehouse for grain.

The silos used to store grain have been depicted on various tomb walls. One famous prototype of a silo in the Old Kingdom developed from a high, raised cylindrical structure similar to a small grain storehouse. Silos would be arranged in a long line against the wall of the backyard, and it is probable that the height to which it was raised off the ground made it possible for the storehouse to be filled with grain at ground level. The later models of this type from the Middle Kingdom were raised even higher and had a door mid-height to dispense grain.[6]

Houses would typically contain simple articles of furniture differing in quality and function according to the social class and wealth of the owners. Furniture would generally include a number of beds, a collection of stools and low tables made of wood or marble placed in different rooms of the house, a chair for the owner, and a variety of vessels made of stone and pottery. Homes were stocked with vessels and containers for daily use such as pans, plates, pans, and pitchers made of different materials, again according to the social status of their owners.[7]

Kitchen Planning and Cooking Tools[8]

The kitchen was located at the back of the house and would be covered by a roof of straw or branches to simultaneously block out the scorching Egyptian heat and allow the escape of cooking fumes. In villas, the kitchen was located entirely outside the house. A grain storehouse would serve the kitchen, sometimes being located alongside it or on the roof where it could be reached by stairs.

The kitchen area would be constructed along simple lines. In one corner there would be an oven covered in a layer of mud or a stove. There would also be one or two stone structures for the grinding of grains, or a tool,

Wooden model of a kitchen from the tomb of Meketre, Eleventh Dynasty, Middle Kingdom. On display at the Egyptian Museum.

known as *rehy,* which was made of two heavy stones placed on top of each other. The top one would have a hole in the middle and would be used to grind grain to make flour for bread. In another corner there would be a basin for kneading dough. The kitchen would contain pots and pans for cooking and vessels for storing water. Sometimes an alcove in the kitchen wall would hold the statue of a protecting household god.[9]

Tools used by the ancient Egyptians were fairly basic. If there was no fixed oven, a portable one would be used. This would take the shape of a circular pottery disc with a hole in the bottom where the fire was lit. If that was not available, ancient Egyptians would simply use a *canon,* a small campfire surrounded by a few stones used to hold the cooking vessel.

Although there is much that we do not know about ancient Egyptian ways of cooking, the depictions, wall paintings, tools, and cooking vessels discovered over the years have left us a general picture of the methods used. In addition to ovens and burners, there were also various pots with two handles for cooking, as well as plates, pans, pitchers, stone and clay urns,

Different types of ancient mortars, on display at the Museum of Agriculture, Cairo.

baskets to hold food, sieves, and pestles for grinding. Other implements used included knives to cut meat and butcher hooks.

Pots and Vessels

Ancient Egyptians used the rich soil of the Nile bank to make pottery. The most essential and therefore most common were basic vessels made of mud and used for cooking or storing grains and liquids.

Over the course of ancient Egyptian history there has appeared a vast array of pottery and stone vessels, judging by the many depictions of vessels on tomb and temple walls, and in hieroglyphs. Different kinds of containers were used for different purposes, including household (plates, wineglasses, goblets, and cups, platters, pitchers, jugs, urns, for cooking or for storing food, as well as milk jugs and beer and wine jars), funerary, and to store cosmetics such as kohl and ointments.

Many remains have been found from the pre-Naqada period (4000 BC) of well-turned red pottery vessels in wide circular shapes as well as tall, thin containers and others in a compressed spherical shape. At the time, the ancient Egyptians made vessels out of stone, the most common design being that with two handles resembling hollow ears. By far the most preferred material was basalt. Toward the end of the Predynastic period, there appeared vessels of red pottery and some round vessels made of pink clay.

Various ancient Egyptian vessels.

The tomb of Khasekhemwy in Abydos contained a number of vessels. Several were made of dolomite and one of carnelian with thin gold covers. Two others were fashioned out of copper and designed for the purpose of washing one's hands, one in the shape of a pitcher to pour water out of and the other a basin to catch the water.

The most common material used, however, was clay, and the most typical kind of vessel was the one used in the storage of grain or liquid. Vessels and pots were considered an essential part of one's furniture, and highly valuable personal property.[10]

Pots and vessels in modern-day Upper Egypt

The same kinds of vessels and pots are more or less used today, although modern plastic kitchen and glassware are also popular. For example, there are large jugs for storing and cooling water, red earthenware urns, and white

Deir al-Medina sieve, New Kingdom.

clay jugs with long necks, as well as clay kneading bowls *(magoor)* and drinking vessels *(mengal)*. Modern Egyptians also use much the same utensils: casserole dishes in which to bake fish with crushed wheat, jars for storing ghee, bowls in which butter is made, and urns to make *ful medammes* (broad beans) or to cook yellow lentils with onion, butter, garlic, and pepper. Small jugs are also still used to store sour milk for up to one year, an essential ingredient in Upper Egyptian *keshk*. Likewise, jugs are used to make aged cheese, store turnips, transfer water from streams and canals, and to store and cool drinking water. Flat troughs for feeding birds and farm animals also still exist.

Food and Drink in Ancient Egyptian Society

Fertile Egyptian soil and the River Nile were main factors in helping the ancient Egyptians to cultivate a variety of plants and rear livestock. Food sources were diverse, and ancient Egyptians made good use of the different kinds of fish, vegetables, poultry, and fruits. The staple diet of most Egyptians consisted of bread and beer in addition to what produce the land yielded, such as onions, garlic, lentils, leeks, turnips, radish, lettuce, and cucumbers.

Since the Predynastic period, ancient Egyptians, rich or poor, consumed various breads made from different grains. Flour would generally be mixed with a yeasting agent, salt, and spices, and sometimes with eggs and butter. The bread could also be filled with legumes or vegetables or sweetened with honey or dates. The ancient Egyptians also used a fair share of legumes such as beans, chickpeas, and lentils as well as vegetables such as peas, lettuce, garlic, onions, and leeks. Dates were the most common fruit, in addition to figs, grapes, pomegranates, watermelon and plums, all of which appear in depictions of daily life dating back to the New Kingdom.[11]

Depictions of daily life show the process of making dairy products such as cheese and butter as well as the extraction of oils like sesame, castor, and radish. The pharaohs frequently used herbs and spices such as aniseed, thyme, cumin, cinnamon, fennel, fenugreek, and mustard.[12]

Several phases of the harvest, including threshing and winnowing grain. Wall painting, Tomb of Menna, New Kingdom, Theban West Bank.

Food and Social Status

Types of food eaten give a clearer picture of the different social levels in the ancient Egyptian hierarchy. In the poorest stratum fell the peasants whose staple diet was bread and beer, and a few simple dishes of vegetables the land generously yielded to them. When they had meat, it was mainly that of smaller farm animals since larger livestock were used in agriculture.

Members of the middle or working classes like construction workers, ship-builders, and laborers were one rung higher on the social ladder, and their professions entitled them to daily rations. Their food varied between meat and fish with plates of vegetables, fruit, as well as the common factor of bread and beer.

Scene of eating and drinking.

Egyptians lucky enough to be born into the upper class lived a life of luxury. Their tables were weighed down with various dishes of meat, fish, and game besides all they desired of vegetables, fruit, breads, and pies. The drink of choice was wine.[13]

Food and Table Manners

The pharaohs were in many senses, gourmets, and the abundance of food sources in Egypt allowed them to vary their dishes in kind and amount, particularly on special occasions and at feasts and banquets.

But while the ancient Egyptians loved luxury, when it came to food they were apparently inclined toward moderation, a prime indication being the lithe bodies depicted in wall paintings and statues. The exaggeration and idealism that pervaded ancient Egyptian art aside, moderation in food and drink is discussed repeatedly in Egyptian literature. An Old Kingdom text addressed to the vizier Kagemni advises: "if you sit down to eat with many people, then look at the food with indifference, and if you desire it, then willpower does not take more than an instant and it is shameful for a person to be greedy. One cup will water a whole crop."[14]

It was also said that, "if you sit with a greedy person, then don't eat until he has had his fill. If you sit with a drunkard, don't drink until he has filled his cup. And don't trip over your own feet, running after meat. Take some when it is offered to you. Don't refuse it, take it and only because it will gladden the offerer."[15]

The *Instructions to King Merikare*, from the First Intermediate Period, encourages readers to "be content with loaves of bread, and beer." Likewise Dua-Khety presents this advice to his son Pepy: "be content if you are satisfied with three loaves of bread, and two cups of beer. If your stomach still feels hunger, resist it."[16]

Ancient Egyptians ate while seated at small tables laden with different kinds of meat, poultry, vegetables, fruits, and loaves of bread. Peasants would sit on a straw mat while the nobles would generally sit on stools or chairs, both eating with their fingers. Ladies and children would sit on cushions placed on the ground. Although pharaohs, too, are commonly depicted eating with their fingers—there is one such relief of Akhenaten and his family—here are depictions of utensils such as different-shaped plates and bowls for soups and other foods including sweet goulash, compote, appetizers and cream, as well as cutting knives, spoons and forks.[17] Forks were used for cooking, not for eating.

Members of the family would probably not meet at breakfast. When the lord of the house finished washing and dressing, he would be offered a piece of bread and a glass of beer and perhaps a slice of meat and a piece of pie. Main meals were taken at noon and in the evening, with a lighter meal consumed in the afternoon, between four and five.[18]

Special Occasions

Despite the abundant produce, perhaps the ancient Egyptian was not unlike the Egyptian peasant of today: content with his daily bread. Ancient Egyptians were easily satisfied with a few loaves of bread, a share of beer, some leeks, and onions. The numerous tomb reliefs that picture the many pleasures of food and drink were probably more indicative of the lives of the upper strata of society, like the higher civil servants, priests, landowners, and nobles. The masses would wait for feasts and special occasions for an excuse to indulge. They likely did not have to wait long as festivals were numerous, judging by the annual special occasions relating to the seasons, the Nile, sowing, harvesting, as well as coronations and funerals.

As an agricultural society, ancient Egyptians held celebrations in honor of Renenutet, the goddess of harvest, and Min, the god of fertility, both of which were held in the summer. During the month of Keihak, feasts for the ploughing of the land were held, and the god Osiris was celebrated for being resurrected after death like the land which dies and then is reborn every season.[19]

Other special occasions that included food were royal feasts like coronations and anniversaries as well as the feasts of the dead in which families brought

food to the burial places of the deceased. Annual feasts to honor the gods were also held as well as other local celebrations specific to each region.[20]

One of the most important religious celebrations was the New Kingdom Beautiful Feast of Opet, in which Amun, the official god of the state, traveled from his temple in Karnak to the temple in Luxor. The feast, which was important because it renewed the legitimacy of Opet, would continue for almost a month, and the king would present many sacrificial offerings including meat, poultry, fruit, milk, bread, and beer as well as flowers and perfume. The feast was celebrated annually and the town of Thebes was fed at the pharaoh's expense. Another big feast was the Beautiful Feast of the Valley, in which Amun visited the temples of the west bank in Luxor to welcome the cemetery gods, and which would last for ten days.

A celebration generally associated with the Ancient Egyptians is the Feast of the Harvest, commonly known today as Sham al-Nessim. The origin of the word *sham* is the ancient Egyptian *shmow* which means 'the season of harvest or summer.' Sham al-Nessim symbolized rebirth, and the ancient Egyptians believed that this day marked the beginning of creation. This particular celebration was famous for its variety of foods which included full, ripe green chickpeas that symbolized the coming of spring, and lettuce, which was popular because of its connection to the Min, god of fertility and reproduction.[21]

Types of Feasts

Formal these were celebrated throughout the country, for example the Feast of Inundation, the beginning of the seasons and the New Year

Local these were region- or city-specific, like those held in honor of a specific god

Personal folk feasts connected to a certain event or group of people

Religious these were in honor of the principal gods

Agricultural these included the feasts of the Nile, harvest, ploughing, and the Renenutet, the goddess of the harvest

Funerary these included the feasts of the dead in which families visited the tombs and graveyards of the deceased to offer them food

Banquets

Wall paintings give some idea of the banquets held by the ancient Egyptians. The variety of food presented depended largely on the status and wealth of the person holding the banquet. The wealthy would order the slaughter of a fattened bull, and the table would be laden with roasted goose, beer, wine, baskets of fruit, different kinds of bread, and numerous desserts. But most would not be able to afford such a lavish spread, so if occasion demanded they hold a banquet, a smaller animal like a sheep or goose would be slaughtered. Drinks would probably be limited to beer, which was very accessible.[22]

Pierre Montet's *Daily Life in Egypt* describes how in well-to-do households banquets were preceded by much fanfare in the storehouses and kitchen. The bull was slaughtered and parts of it were grilled, then the geese were grilled. Kegs of beer and wine were prepared. The fruit was placed on plates and in baskets, and the water would be cooled in deep jugs. Musicians, singers, and dancers of both sexes were summoned. After the guests arrived and exchanged greetings, the hosts seated themselves on high-backed chairs while some prestigious seats would be set up for the more important guests. The rest sat on smaller chairs. The people of lesser social status sat on simple mats while the servants circulated among the guests, giving out flowers and perfume until it was time to serve the feast, followed by dessert. After the meal was eaten, the socializing continued with music, songs, and dancing. More dessert was then offered.

One of the most famous food scenes discovered dates back to the reign of Akhenaten in the Eighteenth Dynasty, and shows one of the pharaoh's daughters eating dried duck with her fingers. Another at Tell al-Amarna represents Akhenaten and his family eating together. The pharaoh holds a cut of roast meat while his wife Nefertiti eats one of the ducks. The queen mother is pictured chewing something and handing food to one of the younger princesses. Beside them stand tables laden with all kinds of food.[23]

A typical Nubian banquet

Here is an example of a Nubian banquet comprising dishes that would have existed a very short time after the pharaonic era.[24] This menu consists of okra with beef, pickled palm tree pith, *roqaq* (see recipe on p. 36), roasted yam, crocodile date loaf, barley porridge, barley beer (see recipe on p. 128), boiled cardamom with cloves. Salt and fruit sugar were placed at any dining table for guests to season or sweeten their food.[25]

Mashed Okra with Beef

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg large okra
3 tbsp ghee
1 onion
1/2 kg beef, cubed
2 1/2 liters meat broth
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
4 cloves garlic
2 tbsp dried coriander

Method

1. Wash okra and place in a sieve to dry. Cut into small pieces and lightly sauté in 1 tbsp ghee. Remove okra and drain in a sieve.
2. Grate onion and sauté in 1 tbsp ghee until golden yellow. Add beef cubes and stir a few minutes. Add broth, cover and simmer until meat is half cooked.
3. Add okra, salt, and pepper and simmer over medium heat until fully cooked.
4. Mince garlic and coriander and sauté in the remaining tablespoon of ghee. Sprinkle over dish. Serve.

Pickled Palm Tree Pith

Serves 6

Ingredients

Small palm tree pith, sliced (like pineapple)
Medium onion, sliced
1 cup red wine
8 cloves garlic, whole
1 tbsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
2 thin slices of fresh ginger

Method

1. Mix all ingredients in a glass jar and leave for 2 days.
2. Strain and serve.

Note: Palm pith, the upper inner part of the palm trunk, is high in nutritional value, traditionally believed to contain hormones that help increase sperm level.

Barley Porridge

Serves 3

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups water or milk
1 cup barley
1/2 cup coconut milk
1 cup of honey or carob juice

Method

1. Bring milk or water to a boil, then add barley.
2. Add coconut milk and stir.
3. Lower heat and leave mixture to simmer until thickened (20–30 minutes).
4. Add honey or carob juice and serve as dessert.

Roasted Yam

Serves 2

Ingredients

2 yams
2 large palm tree leaves, rinsed
1/2 tsp salt
2 tbsp butter

Method

1. Wash yams well and wrap in palm tree leaves.
2. Bury in live coals for at least an hour until they are roasted.
3. Unwrap from leaves and season with salt. Add butter and serve.

Note: Yam is a root vegetable resembling white sweet potato but it is usually bigger (one piece weighs more than a kilogram). It contains a high percentage of carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals, and grows commonly in central Africa.

Crocodile Date Loaf

Serves 6

Ingredients

1 cup full cream milk (goat or sheep)
1/2 cup butter
2 cups date honey
1/2 kg *'agwa* (pitted and packed dates)
1 cup coconut flakes

Method

1. Mix milk, butter, and honey, and heat until mixture forms a smooth ball.
2. Add *'agwa* and stir until mixture turns into a ball that comes off the edges of the pan.
3. Remove from heat. Add coconut flakes and knead until stiff.
4. Place dough in a piece of damp cloth and, using your hands, fashion the loaf into a crocodile shape.
5. Leave to cool. When dry, slice and serve.

Note: Crocodiles are traditionally believed to bring good luck.

Food and the Gods

The ancient Egyptians identified spiritually with the forces of nature surrounding them, including the sun, moon, wind, the inundation of the Nile, the strength of fierce animals like lions, snakes, and crocodiles, or powerful animals that were of use to them like cows and bulls. There were many gods, one for each invisible force behind the phenomenon, thus becoming intertwined with the lives of the ancient Egyptians. They did not only worship tangible powers, but also less tangible ones symbolized by animals. For example, the force of wisdom was symbolized by the ibis of Thoth, and fertility by the bull.[26] The deification of animals made them a symbol for a certain god or power, but it did not stop the ancients from using them for food, transport, or other purposes. Thus the cow was used for farming, and though the ancient Egyptians deified the crocodile, they didn't find anything incongruous about killing it if they felt their lives were threatened.

The large number of gods worshiped in ancient Egypt was reflected in their various functions. The official god of state, changing over the ages, was accompanied by many primary gods, regional gods, and gods of secondary importance, all of whom would have a role in some aspect of Egyptian public and daily life. Nepri, the god of grain, reflected the importance of that crop in the lives of the ancient Egyptians. Renenutet, the mother of Napri, protected the harvest. Hapi was the god of the Nile and its inundation. Hatmethit was a fish goddess, fish being an important food source. Shesmu was the god of the vine, a precious crop. Osiris was the god of the afterlife and had many functions. He symbolized the agricultural cycle, renewed fertility, and made seeds and plants shoot out of the earth. Nefertum was pictured as a man with a lotus over his head and was the god of scents and the lotus flower.

These gods were closely linked to the most important aspects of the lives of the ancient Egyptians and the source of daily food. The ancients adopted other gods as well for their protection—and the protection of their families and their homes—such as the goddesses Taueret and Bastet, and the god Bes. Min was one of the oldest-revered Egyptian deities, worshiped as the god of fertility. Min's status always remained very high and he was eventually worshiped as a primary god. He was represented by lettuce, which the ancient Egyptians believed increased one's strength, vitality, and fertility. It has become very

recently known that lettuce does in fact contain a large amount of vitamin E which serves as an antioxidant and a general immune system booster.[27]

Offerings

The offerings regularly given to the gods or to the deceased were a major part of the lives of the ancient Egyptians, the rituals accompanying these offerings woven into the pharaonic culture over centuries. One of the earliest rituals was the purification of the priest or person who was to approach sacred relics. A tomb engraving that dates to the Old Kingdom reads: "Everyone who enters here must be pure, as pure as they make themselves before entering the tomb of the great god." Purification rites often entailed washing and abstaining from eating meat or fish.

Offerings constituted a regular and organized form of worship. There were daily offerings that, while undoubtedly far less copious than the amounts of produce offered on special occasions, still contained bread, meat, and fruit. The offerings placed in front of the statue of the god and on the offering tables were the main sustenance of priests and workers in the temple. Funeral rituals were similar. Burial rites would take place in the tombs.

The ancient Egyptians believed in an afterlife and one of its prerequisites was the mummification of the deceased's body to preserve it for the other world. Ancient Egyptians also left burial 'furniture,' accoutrements that the deceased would need in the afterlife, from furnishings to jewelry to grains. They would then perform religious ceremonies and offerings would be placed in front of the tomb. A common ancient prayer was that the deceased be blessed with a thousand loaves of bread, a thousand jars of beer, a thousand geese, a thousand bulls, and a thousand of everything that is good. But offerings, which were more likely to be a few loaves of bread on the altar, frequently did not live up to the prayers. In feasts and on special occasions, fruit would be added and sometimes a calf or bull.

The ancient Egyptians believed that gods, like humans, needed food and drink and thus their rituals and rites obliged them to give offerings to the gods at specific times. Daily rituals started at dawn. The priest would approach the statuette of the deity and anoint it with incense. Then he would greet the god and recite some hymns. Taking the religious instruments

Bearers bringing gifts of food to add to a group of offerings. Fish, poultry, and baskets of grapes can be seen. Wall painting, Tomb of Nakht, Theban West Bank.

that would probably be lying in a box near the statue of the god, the priest would sprinkle the god with water, drape strips of linen over it, and anoint it with oil. The priest would then place the offerings in front of the god: different kinds of food and drink, bread, geese, meat, wine, and water. The offerings would be passed among the other, more minor gods, as well as to some kings and eminent figures who had the honor of having statues erected for them in the temple. After that, the priests would divide the offerings among themselves and the morning ritual would be over. In the afternoon, a simpler ceremony would take place. The priest would only pour a little water, and some incense would be burned. Evening offerings were as plentiful and diverse as those of the morning.

Offering rituals were only one of the tasks that workers in temples had to perform. For example, at the Temple of Amun different priests were responsible for the various jobs of making food, such as the wine maker, the beer maker, the baker, the dessert chefs, the chief beekeeper of Amun's temple, and the head of the kitchen of Amun's temple.[28]

Offering bearers, Tomb of Akhethotep, Saqqara, Old Kingdom.

Sacrificial and feast-related offerings

The significant amount of food offered to the gods and the deceased in ancient Egypt is proof of the abundance of produce throughout the land. For example, the list of "the gifts of King Ramesses III to the temples of the gods" is inscribed on what is considered the longest ancient Egyptian papyrus ever found: the Harris Papyrus.[29]

The offerings of the old feasts were instituted by King Ramesses III (Woser Maat Ra Mery Amun), the great god of this temple, and were given every second year, starting from the ninth year of his reign until the thirty-first year of his rule. These offerings would include soft bread, golden loaves, long white loaves, pies in the shape of cows, bulls, castrated calves, white mountain goats, live geese, fowl, honey, fruit, dates, milk, and grape vines. Special grains were vital sacred offerings on the Feast of the Sky and Beginning of the Seasons which were introduced by Ramesses III in honor of his father, the grand Atum, master of two lands (lower and upper Egypt) who ruled Heliopolis, and Ra Horakhty, in exchange for multiple blessings in life, work, and health.

The Burial Banquet

Chapter 99 of the Book of the Dead describes a beautiful image of life after death: "If the deceased knew of this chapter, he would arrive at the fields of the unknown where bread and wine is given on the altar of the Great One and fields and estates filled with wheat and barley will be harvested for him by the followers of Horus. And he will eat from that barley and wheat and will nourish his body with it."[30]

With food such an essential part of the afterlife, it is not surprising that at burial banquets, which took place during burials and in front of the tombs, tables trembled under the weight of food, drink, and bundles of flowers. The family of the deceased dressed in their finery and decorated themselves with flowers. The servants followed, serving pots of wine while everyone helped themselves to the food spread out in front of them, singing to the deceased: "Celebrate the happy day. Anoint yourself with blessings and with oil. Place wreaths and lotus flowers on the body of your beloved sister sitting beside you. Order her to sing and play tunes. Throw all grief behind your back."

If the richer classes knew how to hold these rituals, the poor aspired to them according to their social capabilities. They maintained the same rituals in accordance with their social means so as not to compromise their status in the afterlife. The less privileged imitated the grand celebrations by making small wooden effigies in the shape of mummies inscribed with the names of the deceased and placing them inside small coffins, burying the coffins close to graves housing better-off citizens. In this way the deceased would get, through the effigy that represented him, happiness and the comfortable life of food and drink that the mummy in the bigger grave would have.[31] This was not only for the poor: people of status also did a similar thing, commissioning their graves to be built next to those of royalty in the hopes of gaining a luxurious afterlife with the dead royal.

The Funerary Meal

The ancient Egyptians believed very strongly that the deceased would regain life in the tomb after death and would resume his or her usual activities, and thus had the same needs and daily requirements of life on earth. The ancients were buried with the objects of daily use that they might need in

the afterlife, including food. Meat was a prized possession, as evidenced by finds at a First Dynasty Saqqara burial chamber known as Tomb 3111. Excavated by Walter B. Emery in 1936, the tomb was found to contain ox skeletons as well as remains of what once were cuts of meat.[32] Burial chambers would also frequently contain grain storehouses built as a circular structure with a hole in the top for storing and one near the bottom for dispensing grain. The deceased would not lack for drink either, for graves were supplied with pottery filled with wine.

In the Old Kingdom, the deceased would be buried with a list of delicacies in the hopes that the inscribed foods would forever keep his or her hunger satiated. The ancients also believed that the inscriptions carried a deep magic that would renew the supply of the deceased's favorite foods endlessly and at will. Images of the harvest, grape picking, hunting scenes, and fish pictured on tomb walls were thought to have similar powers.

A full meal was found in one of the mastaba tombs of Saqqara dating to the Second Dynasty.[33] It had been placed carefully next to the woman buried in it and contained loaves of bread, barley porridge, a cooked fish, pigeon broth, cooked quail, two cooked kidneys, ox haunches and ribs of beef, stewed fruits, possibly figs, fresh berries, pies with honey, cheese, and a vessel of wine. Ostensibly, it was not possible for the deceased to suffer from hunger with this meal next to him for eternity. As long as the food was not harmed or stolen, the spirit of the deceased could live on.

Chapter 2
Bread

Bread was a staple of the ancient Egyptian diet, figuring in most depictions of offerings left in temples and tombs and on lists of desired foods carried by the deceased. It was also considered an essential item to be buried with the deceased for the afterlife.

It is therefore not surprising that we can count up to fifteen kinds of bread in the Old Kingdom. By the time of the New Kingdom, this number had risen to almost forty kinds of bread and baked items that differed in shape from oval, to round, twisted and concave, as well as in the kind of flour used whether made from wheat, barley, or corn.

Other ingredients were also added like butter, milk, honey, and eggs. The ancient Egyptians called the most basic kind of bread *ta,* and it would be baked at home by the wife as is common today in rural areas. In larger houses belonging to the rich and which would have many residents and servants, there was probably an area designed especially for bread-making.

Bread in ancient Egypt was usually a thin sheet of dough, like the *roqaq* or *kesra roheifa* (see recipe on p. 36 and 121) of today, or it was a thick loaf like the *shamsi* or sun bread made in modern-day Upper Egypt. To make *shamsi* bread the ancients would leave a ball of dough to rise in the sun before baking, producing a loaf that was dry and crusty on the outside and soft on the inside (see recipe on p. 35).

Dried *roqaq* or *kesra roheifa*.

A document dating to the reign of Mentuhotep III (2019–2007 BC) boasts of his generosity to his men. It reads: "I advanced with an army of three thousand. The battle arena extended to the river and desert. I gave every man a skein of hide and a long stick to carry things as well as two buckets of water and twenty loaves of bread for each day's ration." Senusret writes that fresh bread made of wheat was offered to the priests every day. The elder priest was presented on the eighteenth day of the first month of every season (the feast of the waving) with four hundred loaves of flat bread and ten loaves of white bread for his personal use. His fellow priests would be presented with two hundred flat loaves of bread and five loaves of white bread. Five hundred loaves of *ret* bread and ten loaves of white bread would be offered to the priest of secret affairs, the guard of the god's dress, the supervisor of the storehouses, the supervisors of the grand hall, the supervisor of the house of the *ka* (soul), the scribe of the temple, the scribe of the altar, and the priest of the rituals.

Barley

In *Flora of Egypt* Vivi Täckholm mentions that the remains of barley were found around 5000 BC throughout the cultures of Tasa, al-Fayyoum, al-Badari, and al-Maadi. From the barley found in al-Fayyoum, it appears that at least five kinds (*Hodereum distichum, H. deficiens, H. vulgare, H. hexastichum*, and *Triticum dissoccum*) are no different from the kinds available today.[34]

Barley has been found that dates back to the dynastic period and one type, *Mansuriya* barley, has been identified. A document found from the reign of Tuthmose III in the New Kingdom dated 1450–1405 BC describes the king giving offerings of barley to the gods. King Horemheb (1341–1320 BC) also gave gifts of barley to the people. The Eighteenth Dynasty Papyrus of Nu is inscribed with the prayer, "let me live on white barley bread and red barley wine."

In the Old and Middle Kingdom, religious and linguistic documents indicate that taxes were levied on barley and wheat, with barley mentioned before wheat.

Barley was commonly used in ancient Egypt to make bread and a papyrus dating to 253 BC documents that it was also used to feed animals such as horses and sheep. The variation in the kinds of barley results from the location of cultivation rather than kind of seeds. Barley is categorized as Lower Egyptian barley, and Upper Egyptian barley; and white barley and red barley.

Wheat

The ancient Egyptians made bread almost exclusively from emmer wheat, which was more difficult to turn into flour than other types of wheat. The chaff had to be moistened and pounded to avoid crushing the grains inside. It was then dried in the sun, winnowed and sieved and finally milled. Grain was winnowed and soaked, then ground in a *rehaaya*. It was then sieved through rushes to remove the wheat from the chaff.

Wheat in ancient Egypt dates to the Predynastic period, and many remains of it were found in graves. The Harris Papyrus dating to the reign of Ramesses III mentions the king making great offerings of wheat to the temples and gods in many parts of the country. Wheat in the form of edible grains was not common until the New Kingdom where it replaced barley as the main crop in the country.

Wheat in a clay dish from the Middle Kingdom Tomb of Ani in Gabalein, Eleventh Dynasty.

Wheat was probably not used widely in the staple diet of the poor since it was more expensive than barley. Many dishes required the use of *burghul* (crushed, peeled, and roasted wheat). Athineos writes that Egyptian crushed wheat was of such high quality that it was used in dishes made in Greek weddings. Wheat was avoided in times of mourning for royalty.[35]

Bread-making

Ancient Egyptians stored grain in their houses after the harvest, or in silos made of mud. Peasants would construct grain storehouses that took the shape of a funnel. The hole on top was for putting in the grains and another one below was used to dispense grain for daily use.

Winnowed whole grains were used in making ordinary bread and unleavened biscuits. The grain was soaked or toasted to make extracting the seeds easier, then the chaff was removed and it was sieved, ready to be used in bread-making.

Two men making bread and beer. The standing man is mixing the fermenting beer in a vessel, while the seated man is filling molds with bread dough for baking. Wooden model, Tomb of Niankhpepi, Sixth Dynasty.

Sorting grains would be followed by the grinding process which was done by pounding with a heavy stone pestle or by a *rehaaya*. The women would then separate the wheat from the chaff with a sieve made of papyrus. The chaff would be used as animal feed, and the wheat would be ground and sieved over and over again until the required texture of flour was produced.[36]

The ancient Egyptians produced only the amount of flour that they would need for daily consumption and did not grind for storage. Depictions show grinders working alongside bakers. The grinding process was followed by the dough-making and kneading. The dough was then left to rise. After that the baking process began. Starting from the Old Kingdom Egyptians used cone-shaped molds that were placed directly on top of the fire. When the heat reached the required temperature, the molds were then put inside circular openings cut into slabs. The baked bread would be removed from the pans and put in baskets made of palm leaves.

Another method the ancients used to make bread was to put a slab made of mud on top of two bricks, between which a fire had been lit. The dough was then put on the slab and left to bake.

Scene of baking area found in the Tomb of Ramesses III, Valley of the Kings, New Kingdom.

In the New Kingdom, it seems that while the same process was used, there were also multiple baking ovens so more than one loaf could be baked at the same time. Models of these going back to the Eighteenth Dynasty have been found in Tell al-Amarna. Some of these were cone shaped, about one meter high and made of brick. They had a hole on top to let out steam and an opening near the bottom to light the fire.[37]

Much evidence has survived documenting the process of bread-making. One statue dating to the Old Kingdom and displayed at the Egyptian Museum depicts a woman kneeling and grinding grain with two stones. A scene from the Middle Kingdom pictures men and women grinding grain for flour to make bread. From the Middle Kingdom tomb of Meketre, a model of a baking oven and kneading post was found with both male and female workers.

A Fifth Dynasty wall inscription on the tomb of Ti in Saqqara mentions the process of sieving flour after it has been ground as a necessary phase in the making of bread: "Grind, grind well. I grind with all my power. The servant

is sieving the flour and I baked the cake myself." In the Middle Kingdom tombs, there are breads of different shapes: round, long, or made in the shapes of dolls and animals, perhaps intended for children.[38]

Yeast

The ancient Egyptians made many kinds of bread using yeast to help the dough rise. There were two ways of making yeast. In the first some warm water was added to a small amount of barley flour, and the mixture was shaped into a round loaf. A cross incision was made in the middle of the dough with a knife. The loaf was placed in a dish and the cross filled with water. It was left in a warm place for several days until it rose and a fissure formed in the middle of it like an open flower. A second way of making yeast was to add a cup of grain, lentils, or sesame to a cup of goat's milk. This was covered and left in a warm place. The following day it would be ready to use as a yeasting agent.

Types of Bread in Ancient Egypt

Among the different kinds of bread in Ancient Egypt were:[39]

- A white bread in the shape of a cone made for sacrificial offerings, called *t-ḥedj*. It was used in hieroglyphs and was represented by a figure with a pyramid-like shape. If it was drawn alone or held in a hand, then it referred to the letter *di* and meant 'to give.'
- A circular or oval-shaped bread with long deep lines that allowed the air to vent during baking.
- A popular type of bread that looked like a semi-circle and was expressed in writing by the letter "t."
- A thin hollow bread in the shape of a disc. There were also other kinds of round loaves with thick crusts, similar to a pizza. The center was decorated with an egg. Sometimes filling would be added between two layers, like a sandwich.
- In 1932 Gruss identified a kind of bread that was sprinkled with flour.[40] A raw piece of dough would then be added to the original loaf halfway through the baking process. After being baked, the top would take on a golden color.

- There is evidence dating from the New Kingdom of cylindrical kinds of breads or cakes that resembled a Swiss roll. Some took the shape of a cow, goose, or a woman and were used like children's toys. They could also be used in magic, where some incantations or spells would be read before it was given to cure a mysterious illness, referred to as *a'aa*, a term scholars have yet to decipher.[41]
- Sometimes bread would be shaped like an animal to be given on religious occasions in which sacrifices of livestock were demanded. The poor would place these on the altar.
- In the Greek and Roman periods in Egypt, many additions were made to cakes such as sesame, honey, anise, and dried fruits. *Pankarpian* was a popular kind in Alexandria and was made out of sieved grains. Honey was added before the dough was formed into balls and wrapped in papyrus leaves.
- Theocritus, Theodore, and Pliny mention breads that were made in Egypt out of the doum fruit and the lotus.

Bread in Ancient Egypt

Lotus Bread

Ingredients

Fresh lotus heads
1 cup full cream milk
1 cup warm water for yeasting
Pinch of salt

Method

1. Leave mature white lotus heads until they age. Wash and extract fruit.
2. Leave fruit in direct sunlight until dry, and then grind into flour.
3. Mix with water and milk and salt to form pliable dough. Shape into round loaves.
4. Bake immediately into a cone placed directly on top of the fire until it cooks completely. Serve. Resulting loaves should be easily digestible and light when hot.

Lotus Blossom Bread

Ingredients

1 kg lotus blossom
2 cups warm water for dough
2 cups sour milk (to eat with bread)

Method

1. Place lotus blossom in wooden pestle and pound until the flesh is separated from the stone.
2. Dry fleshy part of the fruit in the sun then pound again to powder. Sieve to purify it.
3. Soak ground fruit in water until it forms smooth batter.
4. Pour batter into empty pumpkin shells.
5. Dig a hole in the ground and cover with clay. Light fire underneath it so it reaches pumpkin shells. Baking should take place overnight.
6. In the morning extract the bread and serve.

Note: For a laxative effect, mix with sour milk.

Bread and Pies in Modern-day Upper Egypt

Today bread in the south is made of flour produced from barley, corn, wheat, and fenugreek. Pounding grains by *rehaaya* is still the preferred method for grinding in Upper Egypt, and yeasting has been practiced the same way for centuries. The basic oven has not changed, and is still used today in Upper Egypt. In the Delta bread for children continues to be baked in the shape of animals, plants, or people as it has been since the First Dynasty.

Barley porridge was mentioned as part of the funeral banquet and is still eaten today in Upper Egypt and Nubia. Likewise, pies sweetened with honey have existed since the Second Dynasty and were also a vital part of the funeral banquet. They are very similar to *masbooba* in Upper Egypt and the *kawyakawy* in Nubia, and also slightly similar to *qatayef* (oriental-type pancakes) eaten today all over Egypt. In Minya, *menattat* or *wase'* bread, made by placing a few burnt bricks on the bottom of the oven which give the resulting bread a few brown markings on the top of the loaf, is still common there today.

The tradition of sweetening cakes and pies with honey and adding ingredients such as dates, sesame, anise, and figs has lived on today, even in very traditional 'Egyptian' desserts like *kahk* (Eid biscuits) which can be stuffed with '*agwa* (dates) or '*agamiya* (sesame and honey), an obvious throwback to the pharaonic age rather than the Fatimid era as is commonly believed.

Ingredients such as sugar and readymade yeast are used in these recipes, though they would not have been available until after the pharaonic era.

Bataw or *Zallout* Bread

Ingredients

1/2 cup yeast
1 small onion
3 cups corn or barley flour, or a mixture of both
Pinch of salt
2 cups warm water
Handful of *radda* (bran)

Method

1. Place yeast in a yeasting bowl. Add onion and leave overnight.
2. Remove onion. Sieve flour and salt, then add to yeast. Knead in high motions, stretching the dough to allow air to pass through and gradually adding in water.
3. Leave to rise for around 1/2 hour. Warm oven, wiping inside well.
4. Prepare a piece of wood with a long handle and use it to place bread in oven. Sprinkle with *radda*. After dampening your palms with water, shape dough into little balls and place in the oven, which should by now be hot. Leave for 10 minutes until the balls turn slightly golden in color.

Note: *Bataw* bread is eaten after making a hole in the top of the loaf and filling it with milk or water, then leaving it to soften. It is a very crusty bread and can keep for many months.

In Asyut today it is also frequently made from corn**,** barley, or from a mixture of barley and wheat. In Qena, however, it is only made of barley. In al-'Ayat and Akhmeem (Middle Egypt), *bataw* is made of corn and fenugreek.

Shamsi (Sun) Bread or *Maltoot*

Ingredients

3 cups wheat flour
Pinch of salt
1/2 cup yeast
2 cups warm water
Handful of *radda* (bran)

Method

1. Sieve flour. Add salt and yeast. Knead, gradually adding water as needed.
2. Immediately cut dough into round pieces without leaving it to rise. Sprinkle a wooden board with *radda* (bran) before placing the bread on it.
3. Leave to rise for 15 minutes then turn over. Leave again to rise then decorate by making shapes and patterns in the dough using a thin piece of wood.
4. Bake in a hot oven for 10 minutes until the top turns golden in color.

Note: Made in Asyut and Akhmeem. In Sohag, it is called *fosoos shamsi*.

Senn (Bran) Bread

Ingredients

1/2 cup yeast
1 small onion, peeled
3 cups bran flour
Pinch of salt
2 cups warm water for kneading
Handful of *radda* (bran)

Method

1. Place yeast and peeled onion in a yeasting bowl. Leave overnight.
2. Sieve flour. Add salt and yeast then fold in water gradually as required. Knead well, raising and stretching the dough to allow air to pass.
3. Leave dough to rise for about 1/2 hour after covering it with a clean cloth.
4. Heat the oven well. Sprinkle wooden board with *radda* (bran). Dampen palms and shape dough into balls, placing each on the board. Place in oven.
5. Bake for 10 minutes until browned.

Note: Made in Asyut.

Qoros

Ingredients

3 cups wheat flour
Pinch of salt
2 cups warm water

Method

1. Add salt to flour, then add water and knead dough.
2. Shape into round discs.
3. Wipe inside of oven clean.
4. Place bread in very hot oven. Bake for 10 minutes. Color should not change. Usually eaten with fish.

Roqaq or White *Feteer*

Ingredients

3 cups wheat flour
Pinch of salt
1 cup water

Method

1. Add salt to flour. Add water and knead until a dough forms.
2. Cut dough into orange-sized pieces.
3. Roll out dough balls with rolling pin into large thin circles.
4. Bake in a hot oven for 2 minutes for soft *roqaq* or 5 minutes for crunchier *roqaq*.

Note: Made in Asyut. Dry *roqaq* is used to make a kind of *feteer* stuffed with minced meat and onion drenched in broth. Soft *roqaq* is used as a kind of bread eaten with *mesh* (aged cheese) or cooked vegetables.

White *feteer*.

Menattat or *Wase'* Bread

Ingredients

1 cup wheat flour
1 cup corn flour
1/4 cup bean flour
1 cup water for kneading

Method

1. Mix flour and water to form pliable dough.
2. Cut dough into orange-sized pieces.
3. Roll out dough balls with rolling pin until thin.
4. Heat oven. Line bottom with fired mudbricks. Place bread on top.
5. Bake for 10 minutes. *Menattat* bread should be a round loaf with a few dark brown bubbles.

Note: Made in Minya.

Bread in Nubia

Khamreet Bread

Ingredients

1/2 kg white flour
1/2 kg brown flour
Pinch of salt
1/2 cup yeast
2 cups water

Method

1. Mix white and brown flour and salt. Add yeast. Knead, adding water gradually until a thick dough forms.
2. Cover and leave in a warm place to rise.
3. Shape into discs, flattening them with the palm of the hand. Bake in hot oven for 10 minutes until browned.

Maltoot

Ingredients

1 cup chickpeas, lentils, or mixed grains
1 cup goat's milk
2 cups wheat flour
1/2 tsp salt
2 cups warm water
1/4 cup oil
1/4 cup ghee

Method

1. Add lentils, chickpeas, or grain to milk. Cover and leave in warm place overnight to form yeast. Strain.
2. Put flour in pot. Add salt and strained yeast. Knead, adding water gradually as required.
3. Cover pot and leave in warm place at least for an hour until dough rises.
4. Grease palms. Tear dough into medium-sized pieces and shape into discs or fingers. Brush with ghee.

5. Leave to rise then bake in hot oven for 10 minutes. Bread should still be soft.

Note: *Maltoot* can be put in low-heat oven again for 10 minutes until it dries and turns crispy.

Goros or *Tawakel*

Ingredients

2 cups wheat flour
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 cup warm water
1 cup frying oil
1 cup molasses or fine white sugar

Method

1. Sieve flour. Add salt then water to form dough. Knead several times. Leave for 1/2 hour.
2. Roll into thin discs with rolling pin.
3. Fold from each corner toward the center.
4. Roll out again with rolling pin until thin. Fold into a round shape or form smaller pies.
5. Heat oil and fry pie(s) until well-browned.
6. Strain well. Serve with honey or sprinkled with sugar.

Other popular breads and pastries in Nubia include *gargoosh* which is similar to *shoreik, roqaq,* or *kesra roheifa* (see *roqaq* recipe on p. 36 and 121) eaten with milk and honey, and *kawyakawy* which is like *masbooba* (see p. 118), but is made without yeast, and resembles *qatayef*—an oriental type of folded pancake.

Chapter 3
Eggs and Dairy Products

Dairy Products

Dairy products were vital ingredients not only in the ancient Egyptian kitchen, but also in homemade medicinal ointments to cure ailments such as eye disease, among others. Ancient Egyptians raised sheep and cows for *irtet* (milk), from which they made cheese, butter, and cream. To increase the animals' milk production, the ancient Egyptians set proper feeding habits and forbade the use of female animals in agriculture. The peasants themselves were careful to ensure that milking occurred in an atmosphere of calmness and safety.[42]

The ancient Egyptians used to make *sert* (cheese) out of sour milk. In the tomb dating to the reign of King Aha in Saqqara from the First Dynasty, two clay mugs holding the remains of cheese were found with *sert* engraved on them.

Cottage cheese seems to have been one of the most basic kinds of cheese consumed. Milk was churned through a goat skin to separate butter from the milk, then the residue of the churning was placed in a reed mat or basket and strained. The remaining product is a nonfat cheese. Parts of these mats have been found and are now displayed at the Museum of Ancient Egyptian Agriculture.

Cottage cheese.

Butter in ancient Egypt was called *baat* and was made by churning milk through a goat skin or in oval-shaped clay vessels called *zebdeya*. On one of the tombs in Thebes in the New Kingdom there are scenes of a goat, a *zebdeya,* and white balls that resemble butter.

Dairy Products in Modern-day Upper Egypt

Cottage cheese, butter, and ghee, which was called *seimi* (from which came the name ghee in modern Egyptian, *samna*) are still used in Upper Egypt today. Ghee is made by melting the fat left over from cream after having extracted the milk by churning. In this case *morta* is extracted, that is the solid matter dissolved in milk after melting the butter. *Morta* is used to make *mesh* (aged cheese) by putting it in clay vessels and topping it with oven-dried cottage cheese and some lupine beans (today, red hot chilli peppers

Egga.

are added to prevent worms from infesting the mesh). Sour milk is then added to the whey or milky residue left over from making cottage cheese. It is then aged for over a year. Sour milk was also added to boiled grain and then dried in the sun to make traditional *keshk*.

Eggs

Eggs in Ancient Egypt

Bird eggs were eaten and offered to the gods. Cooking eggs in pharaonic times was no different from the ways in which they are cooked in Nubia and Upper Egypt today, for in addition to *sekheina* of modern-day Upper Egypt, there was *egga* (where onion and parsley is added), and *shakshouka* (again with onion and parsley). Modern-day Egyptians, however, use chicken eggs rather than duck or goose eggs which ancient Egyptians used in their recipes.

Eggs in Modern-day Upper Egypt

Sekheina Eggs (with onions and rice)

Serves 3

Ingredients

4 eggs
1 medium-size onion
1/2 cup rice, rinsed
1/2 liter water
1 tbsp oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp black pepper
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp caraway

Method

1. Dice onion. Fry in an earthenware pot until golden. Add water. Bring to the boil adding salt, pepper, cumin, and caraway.
2. Add the rice and leave to boil for 10 minutes.
3. Add the eggs to the mixture and let boil for 10 minutes. Serve as a soup.

Eggs with Ghee

Serves 2

Ingredients

1 tbsp ghee
4 eggs
Dash of salt
Dash of black pepper

Method

1. Put ghee in metal (can be substituted with nonstick) serving plate. Place on top of warm stove until ghee melts.
2. Break the eggs, sunny side up, and leave for around 3 minutes. Add salt and pepper. Serve.

Egga (Eggs with Parsley)

Serves 2

Ingredients

1 medium onion
2 tbsp oil
4 eggs
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
1/4 cup flour
Small bundle (around 1 cup) parsley

Method

1. Dice onions. Fry in oil until golden.
2. Beat eggs in a deep bowl. Add salt, pepper, flour, and chopped parsley.
3. Add the fried onions to the egg mixture and beat again.
4. Put oil in a pan. Pour in the egg mixture. Cook for around 15 minutes until done. Cook on higher heat for 3 minutes until darkens in color. Serve.

Eggs with Upper Egyptian *Keshk*

Serves 2

Ingredients

1/4 kg *keshk* balls*
1/2 cup water for soaking
1 tbsp ghee
4 eggs
Pinch of salt

Method

1. Soak *keshk* in cold water for 15 minutes. Drain. Mash with a fork.
2. Fry *keshk* in ghee for 5 minutes or until it is browned.
3. Beat eggs and salt. Pour over *keshk*. Place in serving plate and put in hot oven for 10 minutes. Serve hot.

*Upper Egyptian *keshk* are balls of uncooked green wheat and sour milk dried in the sun.

Traditional oven and cooking pots used today in rural areas of Upper Egypt.

Cooking Eggs in Modern-day Nubia

Gasi gate or *menna* (eggs) are often cooked the same way as in Upper Egypt, whether fried in ghee (see recipe on p. 44), as *egga* (p. 45), or *sekheina* (p. 45). In the latter *douka* bread can be used instead of rice.

Shakshouka

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

1 large onion
2 cloves garlic
2 tbsp ghee
1/2 kg tomatoes, finely chopped
2 chilli peppers, finely chopped
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
6 eggs
1 tbsp chopped parsley

Method

1. Dice onion and garlic. Fry in ghee until golden.
2. Add tomatoes and peppers. Stir until tomatoes begin to dry. Pour in 1/2 cup of water and add the salt and pepper.
3. Pour the mixture into the serving plate. Make 6 small slots with a spoon and break an egg into each one.
4. Decorate with chopped parsley. Place in hot oven for 15 minutes. Serve.

Chapter 4
Meat

Livestock and hunted animals were an important source of nutrition in ancient Egypt. The most popular kind was beef, and people carefully fattened up herds of bulls and calves for slaughter. These were closely followed by lamb, goats and, at the very bottom of the list, deer and mountain goats.

At first the ancients hunted game but it was not long before they began domesticating animals for different purposes of daily life. They made use of grazing lands that conveniently grew naturally in the swamps of the fertile Delta and the pastures that would appear after the Nile flood and would last for a few months. They also knew how to raise many animals such as bulls, cows, sheep, and goats. Tomb reliefs show many scenes of slaughtering animals, especially bulls, which, in addition to their much-coveted meat, were used for agricultural purposes such as ploughing the land and crushing corn as well as pulling heavy loads such as construction blocks.

Ancient Egyptians used to fatten up their livestock by feeding them bread dough as well as discs of *kosb* made specifically for that purpose. Other scenes picture the mating of a strong bull and a cow, and a cow giving birth and nursing her calf.

Animals were treated kindly in pharaonic Egypt, kept well fed, watered, and protected from thieves and wild animals. On one of the walls of the

Cattle were used for labor as well as for meat. Wall painting, Tomb of Menna, New Kingdom, Theban West Bank.

tombs of Meidum, reliefs show two bulls covered with what appears to be a straw mat to keep the animals warm. Cows and bulls were of particular importance because they produced, in addition to meat, dairy products like butter, ghee, cheese, and milk and provided hide, horns, and bones. Their droppings were also used as fertilizer.

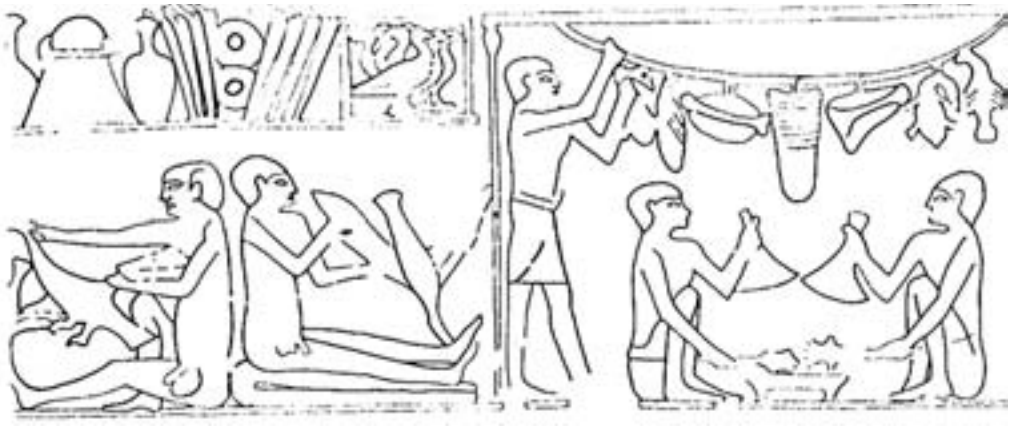
The depictions on the walls of Mereruka's tomb at Saqqara, dating back to the Sixth Dynasty, present many scenes of raising cattle, feeding them, fattening them, milking, and suckling. Temple walls also depicted many scenes of bulls and offering bull meat to the gods or the tomb owner. The bull would be driven to the slaughterhouse by a group of men led by the head butcher. They would then tie up the legs and the head butcher would be the one in charge of slaughtering the animal and cutting up the meat.

Roast leg of lamb.

Hunted and domesticated animals were vital resources. At the top of the list was the bull, an important animal in the lives of the ancient Egyptians. It would not have been eaten by all and was mainly available to the upper classes. The hot Egyptian climate led to the meat spoiling very easily. For this reason there had to be a large number of people in a household to eat it to avoid waste, and this large number would not have occurred except in the royal palaces or establishments. Instead, the poor would slaughter a sheep or a goat. Popular hunted animals frequently pictured on temple walls were wild bulls, deer, wild cows, gazelles, rams, mountain goats, and wild rabbit.

Cooking Meat in Ancient Egypt

The simplest way to cook was by roasting. This would be done by thrusting a stick deep into the belly of a bird, small animal, or fish through the mouth, and grilling it over a fire while fanning the flames with the other hand. Meat would be grilled in strips. Boiling birds, fish, or meat in a cauldron over fire was another common method. Two words have been identified in the



Cooking and grilling meat and different birds. Old Kingdom Tomb of Pepy Ankh, Meer.

ancient texts that refer to fatty matter: *ed,* which means animal fat (geese or sheep), and *mhrt,* which refers to vegetable fat. Goose fat and clarified butter are types of fat that have been identified as being used in ancient Egypt. It follows that frying was also one of the popular methods of cooking meat alongside boiling and grilling. Fat would commonly be added to meat being boiled in a cauldron, as would spices for seasoning. In bigger kitchens, the cook would be helped by someone whose sole employment was to keep the fires lit in the oven or under the cooking pans. An inscription from the Akhethotep tomb in Meer, north of Asyut, portrays the method of boiling meat and shanks, emphasizing that boiling was a preferred method of cooking.

While the most represented method of cooking poultry is grilling, it was less common in pharaonic times. Large-sized cuts such as haunches or cow ribs were either boiled or cooked in the oven, whether by baking, roasting, or being smothered in ghee and fried. Frying and as roasting remain the two popular methods of cooking meat in Egypt today.

Shanks were a part of the funerary meal (the foreleg was the most important offering to the deceased and was always depicted uncooked), and were boiled as they are today. Since shanks take a very long time to cook, boiling is the most suitable method of preparing them.

Cooking Meat in Modern-day Upper Egypt

Frying, boiling and grilling remain the most popular methods of cooking meat in Upper Egypt today. Preferred meats include lamb, kid, camel, shaab (buffalo), and beef, along with parts of the stomach and offal such as kidney, heart, spleen, liver, lungs, brain, and shanks.

Boiled Meat

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

1 liter water
Medium onion
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
1 kg red meat (type as preferred)

Method

1. Bring water to a boil. Add whole onion, salt, and pepper.
2. Cut meat into cubes. Wash, then put in hot water.
3. Make sure to skim froth frequently. Leave meat to boil for around an hour until cooked through.
4. Drain. Serve soup and meat separately.

Roasted Meat

Serves 8

Ingredients

Choice cut of meat (type as preferred)
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground black pepper

Method

1. Wash meat, season with salt and pepper.
2. Put meat in oven. Turn over after 30 minutes to grill sides evenly. Alternatively, attach to a skewer, and turn over frequently until cooked.

Borma

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

1 kg lamb or veal
1/2 kg onion
2 cloves garlic
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
1 tbsp ghee

Method

1. Cut meat into medium-sized pieces.
2. Slice onion and garlic, season with salt and pepper, then add to meat.
3. Place seasoned meat in an earthenware dish. Add ghee. Cook over low heat. Stir every once in a while until thoroughly cooked through (about an hour).

Sekheina (Meat)

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

1 liter water
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
1 medium onion, diced
1 kg cubed meat

Method

1. Bring water to a boil. Add salt, pepper, and diced onion.
2. Add meat after washing it well. Cook over low heat until done (about an hour).

Note: Essentially the same as boiled meat except that here the broth is usually saved for use in cooking vegetables.

Saleqa, traditional boiled meat.

Kammouniya

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

1 tbsp oil or ghee
1 kg cubed meat
4 cloves garlic
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
1 tbsp cumin
1 cup tomato juice
1/2 cup dried chickpeas or *fereek* (crushed wheat), soaked for about an hour

Method

1. Heat oil or ghee. Add the cubes of meat. Stir frequently until liquid is saturated (around 15 minutes).
2. Add garlic, salt, and cumin. Stir. Add tomato juice and soaked chickpeas or crushed wheat. Simmer over moderate heat for 1/2 hour or so until meat is cooked through and liquid has evaporated.

Milk Meat Casserole

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

1 kg cubed meat
2 cups rice
2 cups milk
1 tsp salt (to taste) + 1 tbsp salt (for soaking)
1/2 tsp black pepper
2 tbsp ghee
2 tbsp cream

Method

1. After washing the rice well, soak in water with 1 tbsp salt. Strain.
2. Grease earthenware casserole dish with a thick layer of ghee. Place a layer of rice at the bottom.
3. Wash the meat and place in the middle of the casserole. Add salt and pepper then cover with rest of rice.
4. After boiling the milk, pour over the rice and meat mixture. Cook in hot oven for around 1 hour. Remove from the oven, add the cream, and return to oven for another five minutes until the top turns golden in color. Serve.

Saqat or *Hawaya* (Offal)

Serves 2–4

Ingredients

1/2 kg liver, heart or kidney, or a mixture of all three, diced.
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
2 cloves garlic
1 tbsp ghee

Method

1. Wash meat well after cutting. Add salt and pepper.
2. Slice garlic. Add to meat. Cook mixture in ghee and stir a little.
3. Lower heat. Leave for around 15 minutes, stirring frequently. Then serve.

Grilled Spleen

Serves 2–4

Ingredients

Beef or goat spleen
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
Juice of 1 lemon

Method

1. Clean spleen well. Add salt and pepper.
2. Place in hot oven for around 10 minutes. Turn over for another 10 minutes to cook sides evenly.
3. Slice. Add some more salt and pepper to taste, and the lemon juice. Serve.

Boiled Shanks

Serves 2

Ingredients

1 pair of shanks (cow or goat)
2 liters water
1 medium onion
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Clean shanks well after removing any hair and extra fat. Cut into small pieces, as preferred.
2. Boil water in large pot. Add the onion as soon as water is brought to a boil.
3. Boil onion for 5 minutes, and then add the shanks, salt, and pepper. Cook over moderate heat for at least 2 hours.
4. Remove from heat and leave for at least 30 minutes before draining. Serve with soup.

Boiled Brain

Serves 2

Ingredients

1 liter water
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
Brain of a goat or cow
Juice of 1/2 lemon

Method

1. Boil water. Add salt and pepper. Then add the brain.
2. Leave to boil for around 10 minutes. Drain.
3. Cut boiled brain into slices. Add salt, pepper, and lemon juice. Serve.

Lawawy (Tripe)

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg tripe (veal or beef)
3 liters water
3 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
3 medium onions
1/2 kg lungs
Around 2 meters thin intestines
1 tbsp ghee for frying

Method

1. Clean tripe well with hot water and knife until white in color. Boil a liter of the water. Add salt, pepper, and 1 diced onion. Then add tripe and boil for 11/2 hours. Drain.
2. Boil lungs in another liter of water with salt and pepper for 30 minutes. Drain. Rinse with water and cut into cubes.

Tripe.

3. Cut tripe into palm-sized pieces, placing a piece of boiled lung in the middle of the tripe. Roll into finger-like shapes. Wrap with piece of intestine and tie.
4. Boil last liter of water. Add 1 diced onion, salt, and pepper. Add tripe and leave to boil for around 30 minutes. Drain.
5. Fry tripe in ghee until well-browned. Serve.

Meat in Modern-day Nubia

Meat in Nubia is most often either fried or boiled. Kinds of meat vary between *diordy* (lamb), *berty* (goat), buffalo, and deer. Baking meat in fat is very popular, followed by boiling which is preferred to grilling because the former makes it easier to extract meat from bones, especially with smaller-sized pieces. See recipe for boiled meat above (p. 53). To fry the meat, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and smear with ghee. Place in baking tray and cook in oven for at least 1 hour, turning the meat over to brown evenly and adding a little water to help cook thoroughly.

Chapter 5
Poultry

Poultry was one of the main sources of food for ancient Egyptians, varying, as is the case today, from domesticated fowl to wild birds. In cities there were poultry merchants who raised birds and fattened them up in order to sell them. Game, the most popular of which was wild goose, was also hunted. Geese were also domesticated. Duck was a common bird and, along with geese, made popular grilled or boiled dishes gracing the banquets of kings and priests and people of status in the community. Scenes have been found depicting the process of fattening domesticated birds.

Other common birds were pigeons, quail, and ostrich, which were also domesticated. Pigeons were bred in silos of mudbrick, and their droppings used as fertilizer. Chicken was only introduced to Egypt later in the Ptolemaic period.[43]

Bird-hunting was a passion in ancient Egypt, whether as a profession for game hunters, or as a hobby practiced by kings, princes, and aristocrats. Quail, swans, sparrows, storks, and pigeons were fair game. Several methods were used to hunt birds. Boomerangs were known since the Predynastic period and were used in hunting swamp birds. Hunters hid in the rushes, waiting for the precise moment at which they could capture the bird by flinging their boomerangs.

Birds being captured for the offering table in a relief from the Tomb of Neferhereneptah at Saqqara.

Waterfowl captured in a net, right, and on left, birds being prepared for roasting. Wall painting, Tomb of Nakht, Theban West Bank.

Ancient Egyptians also used different traps made of wood, reed, or palm bark. The most popular kind of trap was the type depicted in one of the Middle Kingdom rock-cut tombs of Beni Hassan near Minya. This trap took the shape of two wings on which a net was spread. The wings were connected to each other with something like a fulcrum, and the trap worked by the two wings closing together, trapping the bird alive.

Depictions on tomb walls show the ways in which men could hunt alone, but there were also more ways in which hunters, usually professional ones, could move in groups. One of these was by using nets. The outer frame of the net was typically made of wood or palm bark, and the net itself was made of linen threads. The net, full of seeds, was placed near the ground, and left open. When it was filled with feeding birds, the net was then pulled closed. One of the benefits of this method was catching the birds alive.

Nets were also used in another manner for migrating quail, in particular, which flew along the waterways between cultivated areas. Two groups of hunters would face each other at a distance and hold up square nets. The birds, feeling the movement of the hunters would fly in fright into the nets at which point the hunters would catch the birds and place them in cages.

Depictions on tomb walls show the methods of preparing geese for the grill, from slaughtering, plucking, and wing-clipping, to cutting their heads and feet off until they were ready for the grill (the method most popular for

Model of a man carving a duck or goose.

Man roasting a skewered duck over a brazier.
Wooden model, Tomb of Niankhpepi, Sixth Dynasty.

cooking birds). At other times, geese would be prepared, salted, and then stored in large pottery jars.

Birds could also be boiled. Pigeons were mentioned as part of the funerary banquet as was boiling them to make broth. They were commonly cooked in goose fat.

Cooking Poultry in Ancient Egypt

Birds would generally be eaten boiled or grilled. Some, such as pheasant, duck, and seabirds, could be salted and preserved. Salting was one way to keep food from spoiling, which easily occurred as a result of the hot weather, and so as soon as they were caught, the birds would be salted and dried.

Poultry in Modern-day Upper Egypt

Chicken, which was not introduced into ancient Egypt until later, is more commonly used in modern-day Egypt. Other birds, such as duck and geese, remain popular.

Force-feeding poultry in Upper Egypt.

Boiled Poultry

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 chicken, duck, or goose
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
1 medium onion
1 tbsp ghee or sesame oil

Method

1. Pluck the bird. Slit the stomach and remove innards. Wash well inside and out.
2. Rub all over and inside with salt and pepper.
3. Place the bird and the whole onion in boiling water and leave to boil for around an hour. Drain.
4. Heat ghee in a deep skillet. Fry the bird on all sides. Serve.

Note: Commonly served with *bataw* bread cut into little pieces which is then saturated in the soup. Alternatively, the leftover broth can either be served as soup with the bird or used as stock to cook vegetables in.

Grilled Poultry (directly over fire)

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 chicken, duck, or goose
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper

Method

1. Pluck the bird. Slit the stomach, removing innards. Wash well inside and out.
2. Rub all over and inside with salt and pepper.
3. Pierce bird with a metal skewer and grill directly over the fire for around 30 minutes making sure to turn it over for an even grilling on all sides. Serve.

Roasted Poultry (in the oven)

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 chicken, duck, or goose
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper

Method

1. Wash and clean the bird then rub with salt and pepper.
2. Place the bird in a preheated oven. Make sure it is turned over frequently for an even grilling and until cooked through, about 30 minutes. Serve.

Stuffed Poultry

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 1/2 liters of water
1 large cup *fereek* (crushed wheat)
1 tbsp ghee
1 chicken, duck, or goose
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper

Method

1. Boil wheat in 1/2 liter of water for around 15 minutes. Turn off heat and leave wheat to cool for 30 minutes. Drain.
2. Heat ghee, then add wheat, salt, and pepper. Stir slightly. Leave to cool.
3. Pluck the bird. Slit the stomach, removing innards. Wash well inside and out. Rub all over and inside with salt and pepper.
4. Stuff the bird with wheat and close the opening by folding the bird's head into it. Bring a liter of water to a boil, add the bird then boil for an hour. Drain.

Note: Another option is to place the stuffed bird in an earthenware pot. Add 1 tbsp of ghee. Roast in a moderate oven for around 1 hour or until tender.

Stuffed pigeon.

Al-Dass (Cooked in Milk)

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 chicken, duck, or goose or 4 pigeons
2 cups of cracked wheat
2 cups milk
1 tbsp ghee
1 tbsp cream
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper

Method

1. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt to water. Wash and soak cracked wheat in salted water for 30 minutes.
2. Pluck the bird. Slit the stomach, removing innards. Wash well inside and out.

Roast goose.

3. Grease an earthenware pot with ghee. Drain cracked wheat well and spread a layer in pot.
4. Cut bird into quarters and place on top of cracked wheat, or put pigeons whole.
5. Add milk, salt, and pepper. Bake in oven until milk is completely saturated and bird is tender (around 30 minutes).
6. Remove from oven. Add cream. Return to oven for around 10 minutes until the top is well browned.

Fried Poultry

Serves 4

Ingredients

4 pigeons, 1 large chicken, or medium-sized duck
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Pluck bird(s). Slit the belly, removing innards. Wash well inside and out.
2. Heat ghee in an earthenware casserole dish. Add bird(s). Season with salt and pepper. Cook over moderate heat for around 30 minutes, turning over occasionally.
3. Cover casserole dish and leave to simmer for around 10 minutes. Remove cover and turn over again until meat becomes slightly pink in color. Serve.

Salted Poultry

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 chicken or duck or 4 pigeons

1/2 cup salt

Method

1. Pluck the bird(s). Slit the belly, removing innards. Wash well inside and out.
2. Rub with salt and also add salt on the inside. Leave in the sun for 3 days until it dries completely. Salting will preserve the meat for up to 3 months.
3. To cook salted birds, soak in water for at least 1 hour before cooking to get rid of the excess salt. Cook according to preference.

Poultry in Nubia

Common birds and poultry in Nubia today are *drabed* (chicken), *batt gati* (duck), *gati* (geese) and *hamaamy gati* (pigeon). They are cooked by boiling, grilling, or frying. Pigeons are stuffed with crushed wheat and onions.

Chapter 6
Fish

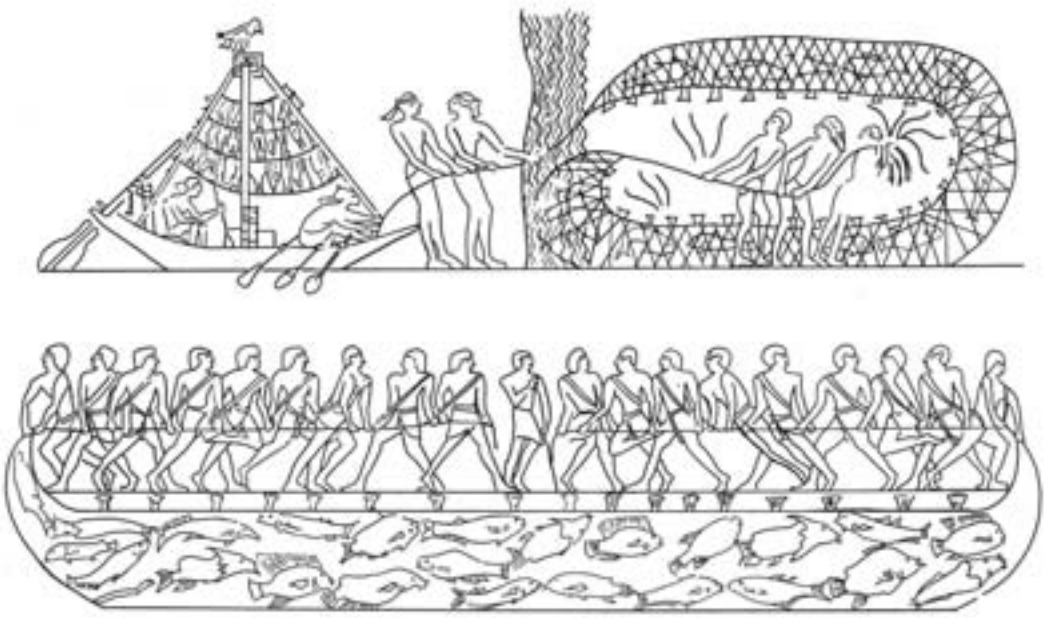
The Nile was the backbone of ancient Egyptian life, providing water—both for drinking and agriculture—a means of transport, and communication. There was an abundance of fish thriving in its waters. Many different varieties were available and the flooding of the Nile meant large catches that had to be preserved for storage by salting and drying. In some parts of the country, there were fish that were considered sacred, and couldn't be caught or eaten, like Nile perch or seasnake. In other parts, it was taboo to eat fish on certain days of the year.[44]

Many tomb scenes depict fishing as well as different methods of preparing fish, including salting and drying. Others show ancient Egyptians consuming various types of fish, indicating the popularity of fish in pharaonic times.

Kinds of fish included Nile perch, Nile barb, seasnake, *bulti*, striped mullet, and catfish. During the Roman period up to twenty-five kinds of fish were identified, including pufferfish, seal, sand leaf, and electric fish.

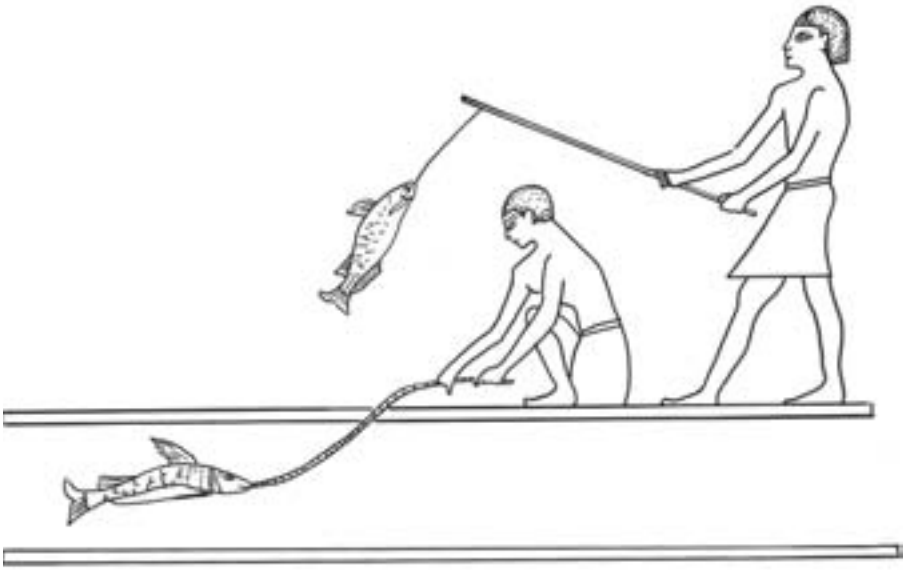
The ancient Egyptians excelled at preserving fish, salting, and drying them, as well as extracting roe. Depictions in the Neb-Kaw-her tomb in Saqqara portray the process of salting and extracting roe from fish.

The most important kinds of fish were *bulti*, the oldest depictions of which have been found in tombs in the Saqqara and Meidum regions, and the



Fishing scene from the Theban Tomb of Horemheb, Eighteenth Dynasty, New Kingdom.

Spearfishing scene from the Twelfth Dynasty Tomb of Senbi, Meer, North Asyut, Middle Kingdom.



Fishing scene from the Twelfth Dynasty Tomb of Khnumhotep, Minya, Middle Kingdom.

striped mullet, depictions of which are also to be found in Meidum. In Kagemni's tomb in Saqqara, reliefs were found of a fish called *kha* in ancient Egyptian, which had a long body and a small mouth. Catfish was called *naar* in ancient Egyptian. The Kagemni tomb also has depictions of other fish including different kinds of catfish.

Fishing for the ancient Egyptians was both a profession and a hobby and was not restricted to the Nile but also extended to swamps and lakes such as Qarun Lake in al-Fayoum. A scene in Menna's tomb in Luxor, which dates to the New Kingdom, shows one of the nobles sailing in a papyrus boat with his wife and children and fishing with a spear.

Rods have been found dating to the Predynastic period and consisting of a line attached to a bronze rod. At other times the fishing spear was used, with

Man carrying offerings of fish. Wall painting, Tomb of Nakht, Theban West Bank.

two prongs and a long handle. The spear was usually used to fish in shallow water.

For large-scale fishing, traps were used, especially in shallow waters. Bottle-shaped cages or baskets were placed in the water with the bait inside. Once in the trap, the fish couldn't swim out again because the opening was too small. Sometimes small nets were used, attached to frames of wood that held the net in the shape of a basket which was either dropped in the water or fixed in the ground under water by a long reed stick. The ancient Egyptians also used large nets held between two boats with rocks to weigh them down. The net would be thrown in the water. The fish would swim in, and the fishermen would then begin to drag it toward the shore. On the walls of Tiye's Old Kingdom tomb in Saqqara is a scene of twenty-two fishermen pulling a net full of fish.[45]

Cooking Fish in Ancient Egypt

There were many ways to cook fish, the most common being grilling. A rod would be pushed through the mouth and the fish would be grilled over a fire. Fish could also be boiled in a pot filled with water, salt, and some spices. Certain kinds of fish were also smoked and salted. Salting was a convenient way to cook fish to avoid spoilage, especially in the hot weather, as it would keep fish edible for a very long time. Salted fish was a main meal for the Feast of the Harvest festival, a tradition that has lived on through Sham al-Nessim celebrations today. Fish and roe were also dried, images of which appear on the walls of Neb-Kaw-her in the Saqqara region. Depictions dating to the Ptahhotep tomb and other tombs in Giza show the extraction and salting of roe from striped mullet. Fish were also drenched in oil and honey wax and then fried. Fish could also be baked in a casserole or cooked with crushed wheat.

Tuna in Papyrus

Serves 2

Ingredients

8 thin slices tuna fish
3 tbsp ground, dried lemon
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp salt
2 tsp honey
2 large papyrus leaves
4 tbsp mint
50 g walnuts
1 tsp olive oil
1 tsp sweet wine
1 tsp soy sauce[46]

Method

1. Rub fish with salt, cumin, and dried lemon. Add honey. Place on papyrus leaf then cover with another leaf.
2. Place, with leaves, in a hot oven for 1/2 an hour.
3. Mix the rest of the ingredients well, and as soon as fish is out of the oven, part the papyrus gently, drizzle mixture on top of the fish, and serve.

Note: This dish does not go as far back as the pharaonic age, but is a perfect example of how recipes that have been introduced into Egypt have utilized ancient ingredients. Tuna in papyrus was popular in Alexandria during Ptolemaic times where Greek ingredients such as sweet wine, walnuts, and tuna fish (common in the Mediterranean) mixed with local ingredients such as papyrus (abundant in Egypt), cumin, mint, and honey. Today's soy sauce substitutes a condiment often used in the Greco-Roman world, *garum*, a fermented salty sauce made from fish.

Fish grilled over fire.

Fish in Modern-day Upper Egypt

Grilled Fish with *Radda*

Serves 2–4

Ingredients

4 *bulti* fish
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
4 cloves garlic
2 green peppers
1 tsp cumin
1 cup *radda* (bran)
Juice of 1 lemon

Grilled fish with bran.

Method

1. Gut fish and remove gills.
2. Season with salt and chilli on the outside. Stuff the fish with crushed garlic, green pepper, and a little salt.
3. Cover fish with *radda*. Grill. Flip over after around 10 minutes and cook evenly on both sides. Sprinkle with a little salt and chilli, cumin, and lemon as soon as the fish is cooked through.

Barbecued fish.

Baked or Oven-roasted Fish

Serves 2–4

Ingredients

2 catfish or seasnake
2 cloves garlic
1 green pepper
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
1 tsp cumin
Juice of 1 lemon

Method

1. Skin and gut fish. Wash well inside and out.
2. Crush together garlic, green pepper, salt, chilli, and cumin. Add the lemon juice and stuff the fish with the mixture.
3. Place in an earthenware casserole and put in a hot oven for 30 minutes. Serve.

Sekheina Fish

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

6 *bulti* fish
1 medium onion
2 tbsp oil
1 liter of water
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
1 ground dry lemon
2 loaves of bread or *qoros* (p. 36)

Method

1. Gut fish and wash well inside and out.
2. Dice onion. Fry a little in oil until golden. Add water and bring to a boil.
3. Add fish, then add the salt, pepper, and ground lemon.
4. Cook for around 10 minutes. Remove the fish from the broth. Remove the fish bones. Place fish on a serving platter.
5. Cut the bread into pieces, placing them with the fish. Pour the broth on top. Serve.

Fried Fish

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

6 fish (*bulti*, catfish, or red mullet)
4 cloves garlic
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
1 tsp cumin
Juice of 1 lemon
1/2 cup flour
Oil for deep-frying

Method

1. Skin and gut fish. Wash well inside and out.
2. Crush together garlic, pepper, salt, chilli, and cumin. Add the lemon and stuff fish.
3. Cover fish with flour, taking care to shake off excess flour. Heat oil well. Fry fish until golden then turn over for 10 minutes for the other side. Remove from oil. Drain. Serve.

Baked Fish Casserole

Serves 2–4

Ingredients

4 catfish
2 medium onions
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
1 tbsp cumin
Juice of 1 lemon

Method

1. Skin and gut fish. Wash well inside and out.
2. Slice onions. Add salt, chilli, cumin, and lemon.
3. Place the catfish in a casserole dish. Put in hot oven for about an hour or until fully cooked and browned. Serve.

White Catfish with Crushed Wheat

Serves 2–4

Ingredients

1 large cup crushed wheat
1/2 liter water
1/2 kg onion
1/2 cup oil
1 kg ripe tomatoes
1/2 (about 1/2 cup) bundle parsley
1/2 bundle (about 1/2 cup) dill
1/2 bundle (about 1/2 cup) fresh coriander
4 catfish
4 cloves garlic
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
1 cup water

Method

1. Wash crushed wheat and soak in water for an hour.
2. Mince onions. Fry in oil until golden.
3. Dice tomatoes. Add to the onion. Stir over low heat until sauce thickens.
4. Chop greens (parsley, dill, and coriander) and add to the onion and tomato. Stir a little.
5. Skin and gut fish. Wash well inside and out. Crush together garlic, salt, and chilli. Stuff the fish.
6. Drain wheat. Place half the quantity at the bottom of a large earthenware dish. Place the fish on top. Cover with the remaining half.
7. Add water to the thickened tomato stew. Pour on top of the fish and wheat. Cook in moderate oven until liquid has evaporated and fish turns slightly red in color. Serve.

Salted Fish

Serves 2–4

Ingredients

3 mullets
1/2 kg unrefined salt
Juice of 4 lemons
1/2 tbsp cumin
1/2 tbsp chilli
1 bundle (about 3 whole stalks) spring onions, to garnish

Method

1. Skin and gut fish. Wash well inside and out. Leave in direct sunlight for a whole day until it starts to slightly decompose.
2. Rub fish well with salt. In a well-insulated pot, place fish side by side. Cover tightly.
3. Smear top of pot with mud to seal cover. Leave for around 3 months until well salted.
4. To serve, remove the salt crust that has formed. Remove fish bones. Add lemon, cumin, chilli, and serve with spring onions.

Note: The pot used should be coated on the inside with silicone, which fills pores and ensures container is airtight.

Fish in Modern-day Nubia

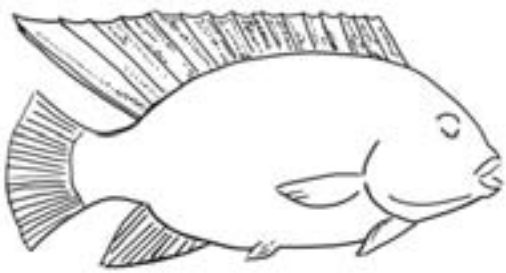
Nubian fish are Nile fish. The most common kinds are *bulti*, catfish, and *besarya* fish.

Fried Tilapia *(Bulti)* Fish

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg *bulti* fish
4 cloves garlic
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp cumin
1/2 tsp chilli
Juice of 1 lemon
1/2 cup flour
Radda (bran)
Oil for deep frying



Tilapia.

Method

1. Prepare fish by removing scales with a sharp knife. Gut fish and remove gills.
2. Crush together garlic, salt, chilli, and cumin. Add lemon. Stuff fish with the mixture.
3. Cover fish with *radda*. Fry in oil until browned. Serve.

Catfish in Broth

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg catfish
1 medium onion, diced
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
1 liter water
1 cup oil for frying

Molooha.

Method

1. Skin catfish. Cut into medium-sized pieces (around 10 cm). Add salt and pepper.
2. Boil water. Add diced onion, salt, and pepper. Simmer.
3. Fry catfish in oil until golden. Place in an oven dish. Pour broth over it. Leave for around 1/2 hour until water has been absorbed. Serve.

Molooha or *Tarkeen*

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg *besarya*
1 cup unrefined salt
1/2 tbsp chilli
1/2 cup oil
Juice of 2 lemons
1/4 cup water

Method

1. Wash fish. Leave in sunlight for a day until it dries.
2. Put in an earthenware pot. Add salt and chilli and cover. Leave for around 2 weeks until it is salted.
3. To serve, wash fish, then mash with some oil, lemon, and water.

Chapter 7
Vegetables

The fertile soil of the Nile provided a suitable climate for different crops such as grains and vegetables, many of which were represented in depictions of banquets and meals. Of the most commonly cultivated were onions which were also used in medicinal recipes as well as on special occasions. Known as a popular food for layman as well as priest, onions were commonly used to flavor dishes. Herodotus even mentioned onions and bread as the staple diet for pyramid builders. Apicius reports that onion was used as an ingredient in a sauce for grilled fish. Onions used to be worn as garlands by followers of Sokar, god of rebirth in Memphis.[47]

Garlic was used as often as onion both as food and medicine, for the ancient Egyptians realized the huge nutritional benefits of both. Lettuce was planted from very early times. A source of Vitamin E, lettuce was also believed to aid in fertility and was thus considered in ancient Egypt as a symbol for the god of fertility, Min. Other vegetables available included cucumbers, peas, taro, mallow, courgettes, purslane, grass pea, celery, leek, mint, and radish. Though very different from the modern variety, radish was mentioned as a ration for the pyramid builders. Radish seeds steeped in wine were believed to be as beneficial as the roots. Radish juice was taken as medicine for the heart. Today radish is a staple in the diet of farmers,

Purslane.

eaten with aged cheese and bread. Green Jew's mallow or *molokhiya* was described in Greco-Roman times by Theofrastus as a "plant growing naturally in wheat fields with a long stem and leaves resembling those of wild berries. This was gathered, laid out to dry, then rubbed into a paste and given to animals as a source of food along with the flower that bloomed with it, which was yellow and as small as sesame." *Molokhiya* is now commonly grown in the Delta and middle Egypt. Mallow and purslane are popular today, and are cooked like green Jew's mallow.

There is substantial evidence that the ancient Egyptians were pioneers in their use of herbs and spices. The most famous appears to be anise, which was known for its calming effect, and mustard which was commonly used in medicinal recipes. Coriander was often placed with the deceased in the tomb (two baskets of coriander were found in Tutankhamun's tomb). Caraway was mentioned as far back as in the lists of offerings of the Fifth

Dynasty. The ancient Egyptians also used cumin in food and in some medicines, as well as oil.

Oils were expertly extracted from olives, caraway, linen seeds, lettuce, sunflower, and sesame seeds. The oils extracted were used for food, lighting, mummification, ointments, medicine, and hair products. Byproducts from the extraction of oil were used as feed for animals and was called *kosb*.

The pharaonic name for okra mentioned in the Harris papyrus is *bano*. Gaston Maspero, the French Egyptologist, briefly mentions finding the remains of this plant. Okra now is one of the most commonly eaten dishes in Egypt, and is cooked in several ways. *Weeka* okra, a popular Upper Egyptian dish, requires the use of a *mefraak* to mash the vegetables; a method that itself extends from pharaonic times.

Various types of cucumber and melon have similarly long been eaten either raw as a salad or along with cheese and bread. Pumpkins and courgettes were planted in ancient Egypt and are sometimes difficult to differentiate in inscriptions. Apicius mentions the method of stuffing courgettes much like Alexandrians do today. Although pumpkin is generally used in desserts, in Upper Egypt as in pharaonic times, it is used as an ingredient in savory dishes. Cabbage was also eaten by the ancients. Today it is stuffed with rice, herbs, tomatoes, and onions.

Cooking Vegetables in Ancient Egypt

Although numerous wall paintings and tomb reliefs have been found depicting fruits and vegetables, there is little to indicate the methods by which they were prepared. Onions, which were eaten raw, comprised a large portion of the ancient Egyptians' vegetable intake, and it is believed the ancients ate many of their vegetables raw. That said, it is likely the ancients also cooked vegetables in pots and pans after the addition of meat and fat.

Roasted Lotus Roots (*Beshnin*)

Serves 4

Ingredients

10 lotus shoots

Method

1. Peel shoots. They should be white in color. Roast directly in fire for ten minutes until yellow, sweet, and ready to eat.

Note: Lotus roots are often round. They are the size of a quince and have a black peel. They can be eaten raw but are less easily chewable.

Vegetables in Upper Egypt and Nubia

Common leafy vegetables are green Jew's mallow (more commonly known as *molokhiya*), purslane, and grass pea. Only the upper part of the leaves is used, and both chilli and lemon, which were introduced into Egypt after the pharaonic age, are used to add flavor to these vegetables.

Jew's mallow (*molokiya*).

Leafy Vegetables

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg leafy vegetables (any kind)
1 liter water
1 medium onion
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
2 cloves garlic
1 tbsp ghee or sesame oil

Method

1. Prepare the vegetable by tearing the leaves. Wash well in hot water.
2. Boil water. Add minced onion, salt, and pepper, then add the vegetables.
3. Leave to boil for 15 minutes until done.
4. Shred the vegetable into a smooth texture.*
5. Crush garlic. Fry in oil until golden. Add to the vegetables. Serve.

*Shred using a *makhrata*, or a mezzaluna, a utensil that loosely resembles a scythe with two handles. The horizontal blade is rocked to and fro over the vegetables until they are brought to the required texture.

Sholoolo (Dried Green Jew's Mallow)

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 medium onion
2 cups cold water
1 cup dry Jew's mallow
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
Juice of 2 lemons

Method

1. Mince onion. Add to cold water. Add the dry leaves. Stir well.
2. Add salt, chilli, and lemon juice. Stir well. Serve.

Baked Vegetables (*Burma*)

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg pumpkin or aubergine
1 medium onion
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
1 tsp ghee
1 cup water

Method

1. Peel the vegetable to be cooked. Cut into cubes. Wash well.
2. Cut onion into cubes. Rub with salt and pepper.
3. Place vegetables and onions in a casserole. Add ghee and water. Cook in moderate oven or on a *canon* for 1 hour until done. Serve.

Note: Vegetables that are cooked this way are pumpkin and aubergines. The *canon* is composed of four bricks set in a square. A fire is lit inside and the pot is placed directly above the fire. Food cooked this way acquires a distinctive smoky flavor.

Vegetables Baked in Tomato Sauce

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg vegetables (courgettes, peas, beans, or potatoes)
1 medium onion
1/2 liter water
2 tomatoes
1 tbsp ghee or sesame oil
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Cut vegetables into cubes (or shell peas and prepare beans). Wash well.
2. Dice onion. Fry in ghee or oil until golden.
3. Peel tomatoes. Cut into cubes. Add to the onion. Add salt and pepper. Leave on heat until it thickens. Add water and bring to the boil.
4. Add the vegetables. Pour everything into an oven dish and place in a hot oven for around 30 minutes until done and turns slightly red in color.

Weeka Okra

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg large okra
1 medium onion
4 cloves garlic
1 liter water
2 tomatoes, crushed and blended
2 tbsp ghee
1 tbsp dry coriander
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli

Weeka okra.

Method

1. Wash okra well and cut into little pieces. Fry a little in 1 tablespoon of ghee. Add the tomato juice. Cook until slightly softened. Take off heat and drain.
2. Dice onion. Fry in remaining ghee until golden. Add water, salt, and chilli, and bring to the boil.
3. Add the okra. Cook over moderate heat for about half an hour until done. Mash into a smoother texture.
4. Crush garlic. Fry with coriander in the remaining 1 tablespoon of ghee. Add to the okra. Serve.

Okra.

Okra with Jew's Mallow

Serves 8

Ingredients

1 kg large okra
1 kg fresh green Jew's mallow
1 liter water
1 medium onion
4 cloves garlic
1 tbsp ghee
1 tbsp dry coriander
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli

Method

1. Wash okra. Cut off tops and chop into little pieces. Tear off the Jew's mallow leaves. Wash and set aside.
2. Boil water. Add diced onion, salt, and chilli.
3. Add the cut okra and the Jew's mallow leaves. Leave to boil for around 15 minutes. Cool.
4. Mix in blender until texture is smooth.
5. Bring okra and mallow mixture to a boil. Crush garlic. Fry with coriander in ghee until golden. Add to the vegetable mixture. Serve.

Okra with Yellow Lentils

Serves 4

Ingredients

1/4 kg yellow lentils
1 liter water
1 medium onion
4 cloves garlic
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
1/2 kg large okra
2 tbsp ghee

Method

1. Wash lentils and soak for 1 hour. Wash well. Place in pot with water and leave on moderate heat until water comes to a boil.
2. Add the whole onion, salt and 2 of the garlic cloves. Simmer over moderate heat for an hour until done.
3. Wash okra and cut off tops. Slice. Add to the lentils. Leave for another 1/2 hour.
4. Crush remaining 2 garlic cloves. Fry in ghee until golden. Add to the vegetables. Serve.

Vegetables in Nubia

Methods of cooking vegetables are very simple and use few ingredients. *Jokood* is similar to the Upper Egyptian method of preparing leafy greens, where soup or stock is boiled, then a finely chopped onion, salt, and pepper are added. The vegetables are boiled then pureéd into a smooth paste. The paste is added to broth along with crushed garlic and coriander or dill that have been fried in ghee or oil. Vegetables that are cooked this way are mallow, Jew's mallow (fresh or dry), and okra (fresh or dry).

Nubians use the same recipe as Upper Egyptians to cook other vegetables such as peas, beans and courgettes, where an onion is finely chopped and fried in ghee until golden. Tomato juice, salt, and pepper are then added and the broth is left to thicken. Water is added and brought to a boil after which the vegetables are added and left over moderate heat until cooked through. Nubians call this method *tadweera*, and it is popular not only in Nubia and Upper Egypt but throughout the country. It was not used in ancient Egypt as tomatoes, a key ingredient, had not yet been introduced. Vegetables that are cooked in this way are courgettes and green beans.

Courgettes by *Tadweera*

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg large courgettes
1 medium onion
1 cup tomato juice
2 cups water
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
1/2 cup fresh (green) chickpeas

Green beans.

Method

1. Dice onion. Fry in ghee until golden. Add the tomato juice, salt, and pepper and leave to thicken.
2. Add water and bring to the boil. Slice courgettes and add. Leave to boil for a short while.
3. Add the chickpeas. Cook for about 30 minutes, then lower heat and leave for another 15 minutes until it thickens. Serve.

Green Beans by *Tadweera*

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg green beans
1 medium onion
1 cup tomato juice
2 cups water
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Wash vegetables, and remove the strings from the beans. Slice diagonally.
2. Dice onion and fry in ghee until golden. Add tomato juice, salt, and pepper and leave to thicken.
3. Add water and bring to the boil. Add vegetables and leave to simmer for about 1/2 an hour. Lower heat until sauce thickens. Serve.

Mallow with Greens

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg mallow
1 medium onion
4 cloves garlic
1 liter water
1 tbsp ghee
1/2 tsp chilli
1 large bundle (about cup and a half) coriander
1 large bundle (about cup and a half) dill

Method

1. Tear off mallow leaves and wash well.
2. Boil water. Add cubed onion, salt, and chilli and leave to simmer for a little.
3. Add the vegetables and leave to boil for around 10 minutes until done.
4. Leave to cool then rub into a smooth texture.
5. Crush garlic, coriander, and dill. Fry in ghee until slightly browned in color and add to the previous mixture.

Okra

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 kg large okra, fresh or dry (if latter, then soak for 1 hour in water before cooking)
1 medium onion
4 cloves garlic
1 liter water
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli

Method

1. Boil water. Add cubed onion, salt, and chilli. Leave to boil for a short while.
2. Slice okra and add to water. Cook for about 5 minutes.
3. Leave to cool, and then rub into smoother texture. Crush garlic and fry in ghee until golden. Add to okra. Serve.

Jacky Greet

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 medium onion
2 cloves garlic
2 tomatoes
1 large bundle green or fresh coriander (about 11/2 cups)
1 large bundle dill (around 11/2 cups)
1/2 liter water
Quantity of *douka* bread
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
1 tsp ghee

Method

1. Bring water to a boil. Cut onion into little pieces. Add, along with salt and chilli, to the water and leave to boil for 10 minutes.
2. Wash tomatoes and add to previous ingredients. Leave to cook (around another 10 minutes).
3. Crush garlic and greens (after washing them well), fry in ghee then add to the previous mixture,
4. Cut bread into little pieces. Add. Rub into a smoother dough-like texture. Serve.

Chapter 8
Legumes

Legumes were, and still are, a popular food. Plutarch mentions them as being offered to the gods in ancient Egypt, although the priests used to avoid them for fear of flatulence. Types of legumes consumed were beans, peas, chickpeas, crushed wheat, lentils, lupine beans and fenugreek.

Herodotus mentioned that lentils were eaten by pyramid builders in the Old Kingdom. They were also used to make bread and as feed for animals.

Found in the tombs of the Fifth Dynasty were *eyorti* (Egyptian beans), a name similar to the one used in Egypt now, *herati*. The ancient Egyptians cooked different kinds of beans in various ways. Beans were cooked the same way as peas and were also used in making *besara*. The latter was prepared by boiling crushed beans, mashing them into a smooth thick paste, then adding spices and herbs such as cumin, dry and fresh coriander, salt, parsley, and dry Jew's mallow. Beans were also allowed to sprouts and made into many dishes, from soup to *fuliya* with herbs.

The traditional dish *ful medammes,* Egyptian-style broad beans, was made in an urn and buried in the ashes of the oven until the next day. Alternatively it could be placed over low heat overnight (as it is cooked in Upper Egypt today). Beans could be hashed and soaked in water long enough to soften and then ground by *rehaaya* before adding some herbs and vegetables like leek, spring onions, and dill as well as cumin and cardamom. The paste

would then be shaped into discs or patties and fried in oil to make what is now known as *taameya*.

Peas were also commonly found throughout ancient Egypt. Ramesses III leaves mention of an offering of 11,998 pots of peas to the god of the Nile.

Chickpea**s** have been found in tombs dating to the Middle Kingdom in Matariya. Today it is believed they more likely existed as early as 1400 BC. The ancients considered the ripening of chickpeas an indicator that spring was approaching. Chickpeas were eaten green *(melana)*, alongside cheese, stewed *(medammes)* in an urn, or added to cooked vegetables like mallow. *Fereek* (crushed wheat) made a popular food whether cooked alone, used to make casseroles, or used to stuff birds. Today it is also used in Upper Egyptian *keshk*.

Lentils have been found that date back to the Predynastic period, in the Pyramid of Djoser, Dra Abu Naga, and Deir al-Bahari. A depiction in the temple of Ramesses III shows a female servant preparing a meal of lentils cooked in the same way as beans or made into a soup. Lentils were also used as offerings to the gods and lived on as a popular ingredient during the Ptolemaic and Roman ages. Pliny mentions two kinds of lentils: brown and yellow, recording that lentils cost the same as wheat.

Lupine beans were found in several tombs, and were used to make beer (to make it bitter). Lupine beans were soaked in water, and then salted, and cumin and chilli were added.

Fenugreek was allowed to sprout and then eaten green (as is now done in Nubia), or soaked and boiled and served as a drink sweetened with honey. Today lupines are soaked in water and then spiced with salt, cumin, and chilli. Fenugreek was either eaten raw or soaked, boiled, and served as a drink sweetened with honey. Today fenugreek is a popular drink served alongside lupine beans and sold off carts all over the country.

Lentil soup.

Cooking Legumes in Ancient Egypt

Lentil Soup

Serves 2

Ingredients

300 g brown lentils
1 red medium onion
1 tbsp ghee or sesame paste
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp anise
1 tsp dried dill
1/2 liter water or stock

Method

1. Wash lentils. Place in water over low heat for around 15 minutes. Add anise and cumin.
2. Mince onions. Fry in ghee until golden in color. Add lentil mixture and dill. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

A selection of legumes.

Cooking Legumes in Modern-day Upper Egypt

Legumes are usually cooked by *tadmees* (slow cooking over low heat for around 4 or 5 hours), or in a casserole dish with ghee and garlic. Chilli adds flavor to dishes described below, but it did not exist in ancient Egypt. Tomatoes, which were introduced into Egypt after the pharaonic era, are also used in some of today's recipes.

Baked *Fereek*

Serves 2

Ingredients

2 cups *fereek*
2 cups water
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Wash *fereek*. Add salt to hot water and soak *fereek* in it for an hour. Drain.
2. Prepare casserole by greasing it with ghee. Add *fereek*. Add salt and pepper.
3. Pour water in the casserole. Place in a hot oven for 1 hour until cooked. Serve.

Note: *Fereek* is a boiled and crushed grain which is left to dry in the sun for 3 days to 1 week.

Fereek with Tomatoes

Serves 2

Ingredients

2 cups *fereek*
1 cup tomato juice
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Wash *fereek*. Place in enough water to cover it. Bring to a boil and simmer for about 30 minutes until cooked then drain.
2. Prepare casserole by greasing it with ghee. Add boiled *fereek*, salt and pepper, then tomato juice.
3. Place casserole in oven for around 30 minutes until *fereek* absorbs all the water.

Lentils

Serves 2

Ingredients

2 cups yellow, brown, or green lentils
1 liter water
1 medium onion
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp ghee
4 cloves garlic
1/2 tsp chilli
1/2 cup dry Jew's mallow (only use with green lentils)

Method

1. Wash lentils. In a pot, cover lentils with water and, over low heat, bring to a boil.
2. Skim froth frequently. Add whole onion and salt and leave until cooked through, about 1 hour.
3. Place lentils in a casserole dish. Heat ghee and fry garlic until golden. Mash, then add to the lentils. Cook until thickened. Add salt and chilli.

Note: This method is suitable for cooking all kinds of beans. If using green Jew's mallow, lentils will have a greener color.

Brown Lentils

Serves 2

Ingredients

1 liter water
2 cups brown lentils
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
4 cloves garlic
1 tbsp ghee

Brown lentils.

Method

1. Heat water until it begins to boil.
2. Wash lentils and place in pot. Simmer for around 30 minutes, frequently skimming the froth that rises to the surface.
3. Place lentils in a casserole dish. Add salt and chilli. Fry garlic in ghee. Mash and add to lentils.
4. Cook in moderate oven for around 15 minutes. Serve.

Green Besara

Serves 4

Ingredients

2 cups crushed fava beans
1 medium onion
4 cloves garlic
1 liter water
1 tbsp corn oil
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
1/2 cup dry Jew's mallow
1 tsp dried coriander

Method

1. Boil water. Add beans. Leave to simmer for 1/2 hour.
2. Place in a pot. Add salt and chilli, then Jew's mallow. Stir vigorously.
3. Fry garlic and dried coriander in oil until golden. Mash and add to *besara* mixture. Cook for 10 minutes.
4. Serve in small side dishes with green onions.

Note: *Besara* is made out of dried and crushed peeled fava beans.

Upper Egyptian Keshk (Wheat Balls in Sauce)

Serves 2

Ingredients

1/2 liter water
2 cups *keshk* wheat balls
4 cloves garlic
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
1/2 cup flour dissolved in 1/2 cup water
1 loaf of *bataw* bread (p. 34)

Method

1. Boil water. Crush *keshk* balls. Add to water, and leave to boil for about 30 minutes.
2. Fry garlic in ghee until golden. Add to the keshk. Add salt and chilli.
3. Dissolve flour in 1/2 cup water. Add to keshk, constantly stirring until the mixture thickens.
4. Dry bread in oven then crumble. Add to keshk. Bring to the boil.
5. Pour *keshk* in little bowls. Serve cool.

Note: Upper Egyptian *keshk* are balls of uncooked green wheat to which sour milk has been added and which have dried in the sun.

Poached Wheat Balls

Serves 4

Ingredients

1/2 kg *fereek*
1 liter water
2 medium onions
1 small bundle (around 1 cup) parsley
1 small bundle (around 1 cup) dill
1/2 kg minced meat (lamb, veal, or goat)
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli
1 liter water

Ful medammes.

Method

1. Wash *fereek*. Cover with water and boil for about 1/2 an hour until done. Drain.
2. Mince 1 onion. Add chopped parsley and dill.
3. Mix *fereek* with raw minced meat. Add the onion and greens. Add salt and chilli. Shape into egg-sized balls.
4. Boil liter of water. Dice the other onion. Add to water. Poach the wheat balls, leaving them in the water for around 15 minutes at a time. Drain. Serve with the broth.

Note: Alternatively, dice onion and fry in ghee until golden. Add tomato juice, salt, and pepper. Leave to thicken. Add water and bring to the boil. Add kebabs and fry for around 15 minutes until done. Simmer another 10 minutes until it thickens.

Ful Medammes

Serves 6

Ingredients

2 cups dried fava beans (or European broad beans)
4 cloves garlic
1 liter water
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp chilli

Method

1. Boil water. Add beans after washing them. Leave to simmer for 30 minutes, frequently skimming froth.
2. Stew over moderate heat for at least four hours, adding garlic, salt and chilli.

Corn Kebabs

Serves 3

Ingredients

Ears of corn
Number of spring onion shoots
1 medium onion
1 liter water
1 cup tomato juice
1 tbsp ghee
1 tsp cumin

Method

1. Roast corn in oven over low heat until dry. Leave to cool. Take kernels off the cob. Grind.
2. Cut spring onion shoots into strips. Boil in 1 cup water for around 10 minutes.
3. Add the flour to the boiled onions. Then add salt, pepper, chilli, and cumin. Mix into a dough.
4. Shape into balls. Dry in hot sun.
5. Dice onions. Fry in ghee until golden. Add tomato juice and leave to thicken (around 10 minutes). Add water and bring to the boil.
6. Add the dry corn balls and cook until done (around 30 minutes). Serve.

Cooking Legumes in Modern-day Nubia

The types of legumes eaten and the ways in which they are cooked are for the most part similar in Upper Egypt and Nubia. The most common kinds in Nubia are *ful, fereek* (see p. 105), yellow lentils, brown lentils (see p. 106) in addition to *ful medammes* (see p. 109) and bean sprouts with rice. The latter is a typically Nubian dish, as rice was not introduced into Egypt until after the pharaonic age. Fenugreek and lupine beans are also typical Nubian foods. Fenugreek can be prepared in several ways and can be made into a drink or a dessert, and is even eaten green or uncooked, as it was in ancient Egypt.

Bean Sprouts with Rice

Serves 3

Ingredients

2 cups bean sprouts
1 cup rice
3 cups water
2 tbsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Soak beans overnight so they are easy to peel. Fry peeled bean sprouts in ghee until golden. Add water, salt, and pepper. Bring to the boil.
2. Wash rice. Place in casserole. Add the boiled mixture.
3. Cook casserole in moderate oven for around 30 minutes until done, serve.

Fresh Fenugreek

Serves 4

Ingredients

1/4 kg fresh fenugreek
Water for soaking

Fresh fenugreek.

Method

1. Soak fenugreek for 12 hours. Strain by placing in a sieve and covering with a damp cheesecloth for 5 days, occasionally re-dampening towel so fenugreek sprouts grow long stems.
2. Serve green (much like cress) with lupine or with *mesh* (aged cheese)

Boiled Fenugreek

Serves 4

Ingredients

1/4 cup dried fenugreek
1 liter water
1 small cup honey

Boiled fenugreek.

Method

1. Wash fenugreek. Cover with water and boil for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and let steep for 1 hour.
2. Sweeten with honey. Milk can also be added if desired.

Floured Fenugreek

Serves 4

Ingredients

1/2 cup oil
1 cup fenugreek (ground)
1 cup flour
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup honey (or 1 tsp salt, if preferred savory)

Method

1. Heat oil. Fry fenugreek for around 5 minutes
2. Mix flour in water. Add to the fenugreek. Stir, adding honey or salt.
3. Keep stirring until a dough texture forms. Simmer for around 10 minutes until done. Serve.

Salted Lupines

Serves 10

Ingredients

1 kg lupine beans
1 liter water
3 tbsp salt
Juice of 2 lemons
1 tbsp cumin
1/2 tsp chilli

Method

1. Boil lupines for an hour. Soak for 5 days, changing the water every 12 hours.
2. Salt the lupines on the fifth day, adding lemon juice, cumin, and a little chilli before serving.

Note: Lupine beans, which are rich in protein, are soaked not only so they soften but also so that they lose their bitterness.

Salted lupines.

Chapter 9
Fruits and Desserts

Fruits and Nuts in Ancient Egypt

The ancient Egyptians realized early on the huge nutritional benefit of grapes, and they ate them fresh, dried as raisins, and pressed into wine. They also offered grapes to the gods on special occasions. While grapes were not mentioned except in depictions from the Third Dynasty, wine vessels and a grape press were found that dated to the First Dynasty.

The sycomore was considered a sacred tree, and its fruit was frequently found inside tombs. Melon was also often planted. Dates were eaten either fresh, or dried, and a type of wine was made out of them, just like the fig, which was also a popular fruit, eaten both fresh and pressed into wine. The soft part of the doum fruit, related to the palm, was eaten or the fruit was made into a dough or used as a sweetener.

Pomegranate first appears in the New Kingdom in an image of the tree in one of the tombs in Tell al-Amarna that goes back to the reign of Akhenaten. The ancient Egyptians seemed to have a special liking for this fruit which was eaten fresh, or could be squeezed to make juice, and, later on in the New Kingdom, could be pressed and fermented to make wine. Other popular fruits included lotus blossom, berries, and tiger nuts (a tuber) and later more fruits and nuts were cultivated such as almonds, walnuts, and apples.

Tiger nuts found in a tomb in Asyut dating to 5000 BC.

The upper classes were fond of planting orchards and gardens with fig trees, doum and date palms, sycomore fig trees, pomegranate, and others, depending on how wealthy the family was.

With such an abundance of fruits, it is not unlikely that ancient Egyptians ended their meals with a selection of fresh fruit. Fruit was also stewed so that it could keep longer. Boiled or stewed fruit for example (like today's canned fruit) was mentioned as being offered in the funeral banquet placed next to the deceased. Boiled or stewed dates and apples are still eaten in Upper Egypt today. A honey-like sweetener was made from carob and date and used to stuff date and fig pies and also to make breads such as lotus blossom bread. Papyrus was one of the oldest plants used in many aspects of ancient Egyptian life. The soft lower part (similar to palm pith) contains little sugar and could be eaten fresh or roasted. Papyrus could also be used in many medicinal recipes.

Preparing tiger nuts. Wall painting in Theban Tomb 100, Eighteenth Dynasty.

Measuring tiger nuts. Preparing tiger nuts. Wall painting in Theban Tomb 100, Eighteenth Dynasty.

Tiger Nut Dessert

Serves 4

Ingredients

2 cups tiger nuts
1 cup honey
2 tbsp ghee

Method

1. Grind tiger nuts with wooden pestle. Sieve.
2. Add honey to the ground tiger nuts and mix into pliable dough.
3. Put dough in a saucepan. Place on a warm stove and add ghee.
4. Leave to simmer on low heat until it thickens and then completely cooks. It is cooked when it starts emitting a pleasant smell.
5. Leave tray until dessert cools, then shape into conical loaves. Serve.

Makhrouta.

Desserts in Modern-day Upper Egypt and Nubia

Upper Egyptian desserts are usually pastry based, the most common ingredients being flour, yeast, ghee, honey, fruit, and, most recently, sugar.

Dough is often shaped into pies that are then either baked in the oven or fried. The dough can also be cooked *aseeda* style, which is by mixing flour with water. The mixture is placed on the fire to form a ball of dough to which ghee or honey are then added.

Masbooba

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

1 medium onion, to help in fermenting yeast
1/2 cup yeasted dough
11/2 kg wheat flour
Pinch of salt
2 cups warm water
1 cup milk
1/2 cup honey

Method

1. Add onion to the yeasted dough. Cover and leave overnight.
2. Add dough to the flour, then the salt. Knead, gradually pouring in water until it forms a batter.
3. Using a ladle, pour quantities of batter into a frying pan to form pancakes.
4. Soak the pancakes in milk. Add honey and serve.

Qadoosiya

Serves 10

Ingredients

11/2 kg wheat flour
1 pinch salt
1 cup warm water
1/4 cup ghee
1 cup milk
1/2 cup honey

Method

1. Add salt to flour. Gradually add water, kneading to form soft dough.
2. Twist into strips (by rubbing dough between palms of hand).
3. Steam bake by placing the dough in a sieve and placing the sieve in a pot of water on top of the stove. Leave for around 30 minutes.
4. Mix the hot *qadoosiya* with ghee. Add milk and honey. Serve.

Makhrouta

Serves 10

Ingredients

Pinch of salt
11/2 kg flour
1 cup warm water for kneading
2 cups water for boiling
1/4 cup ghee
1/2 cup honey

Method

1. Add salt to flour. Add water and knead to form stiff dough. Cut lengthwise into strips.
2. Boil the other 2 cups of water, and poach the dough for around 15 minutes.
3. Add ghee to the dough while still hot, then add honey. Serve.

Feteer Metabba

Serves 4

Ingredients

2 cups wheat flour
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 cup warm water
1 cup oil for frying
1 cup honey

Method

1. Sieve flour. Add salt, then water. Mix vigorously then knead, making sure to stretch dough to allow air to pass through. Let dough sit for 30 minutes.
2. Roll dough with rolling pin into thin layer, pulling at the corners to make it even thinner.
3. Fold into a palm-sized square.
4. Fry in hot oil on both sides until golden. Sweeten with honey while still hot.

Madeeda

Serves 10

Ingredients

2 cups warm water
11/2 kg wheat flour
Pinch salt
1/2 cup ghee
1/2 cup honey

Roqaq.

Method

1. Boil water. Add flour and salt. Stir well to form a ball of dough. Remove from heat.
2. Add ghee and sugar. Mix well. Serve.

Roqaq

Serves 10

Ingredients

Pinch of salt
3 kg flour
3 cups water
1 cup honey

Method

1. Add salt to flour. Add water gradually to form pliable dough. Cut into orange-sized balls.
2. Spread dough with rolling pin into thin circles.
3. Bake in a hot oven for around 2 minutes for soft *roqaq*.
4. Break *roqaq* into little pieces. Add hot milk. Sweeten with honey and serve.

Stewed Dates

Serves 4

Ingredients

1/2 kg *zaghloul* (red) dates
1 liter water

Method

1. Wash dates and pit. Place in a pot. Cover with water and bring to a boil.
2. Simmer over low heat for 4 hours until it has a jam-like consistency. Serve.

Zalabya

Serves 10

Ingredients

1/2 cup yeast
2 cups flour
Pinch of salt
1 cup warm water
Oil for deep frying
1 cup honey
1 tsp ground cinnamon

Zalabya.

Method

1. Add yeast to flour and salt. Add water gradually and mix to form a light batter. Leave for 1 hour to rise.
2. Heat oil and, using a teaspoon, drop in the batter (the batter will form round little balls as soon as it is immersed in oil).
3. Drain. Add honey and cinnamon. Serve.

Chapter 10
Beverages

Common drinks were beer, *bouza* (fermented barley), wine, and milk (which was drunk fresh because of the hot weather). Aniseed, cinnamon, caraway (which dates back to the Fifth Dynasty) and fenugreek were either boiled or soaked then drunk. More festive beverages included soaked dates, carob, and doum fruit which were certainly used as syrupy sweeteners if not as drinks.

Beer in Ancient Egypt

Beer was more or less the national drink in ancient Egypt, and, along with bread and onions, was part of the staple diet. It also played a significant role in pharaonic culture and was served everywhere and drunk at all times and in all places, whether in the house, field, or on any important occasion.

Beer is mentioned in many contexts related to ancient Egyptian history and the habits of daily life. Ancient Egyptian literature that mentions beer includes a series of verses called the Ani advice, in which Ani warns his son Khonshotep about the effects of beer: "Don't risk drinking a whole keg of beer for after that you will speak only nonsense. And if you fall and break your limbs, no one will extend their hands to you to help you. As for your drinking companions, they will say 'stay away from that fool.' If someone comes looking for you and interrogates you, they will find you stretched out on the floor like a child."[48]

Doum palm.

Doum fruit.

Another warning from father to son in the New Kingdom takes the form of a letter: "You have left writing and have surrendered to hedonistic pleasures, skulking from street to street after the smell of beer. To destruction. Beer scares people from you and destroys you. You are like a temple without a god, or a house without bread. People have escaped from you because you wound them. I wish you knew that beer is a sin, and I wish you would swear not to drink *shedda* (an alcoholic drink). I wish you would forget to drink *telk* (another alcoholic drink) and not surrender to the bottle."[49]

Still, beer was a prized offering, whether to the gods or to the deceased, and was drunk every day. A famous ancient Egyptian myth recounts how Ra, god of the Sun, had grown old and began to fear that his human subjects were beginning to conspire against him. He appealed to the goddess Hathor—who represents Ra's eye—to destroy mankind. But Ra had a change of heart and tricked Hathor into drinking beer until she became drunk, thus rendering her incapable of carrying out her mission.[50]

Beer Brewing

The ancient Egyptians made different flavored beers out of barley, wheat, and dates. The grains were ground to make a dough similar to that from which bread was made, but beer dough was not left long in the oven, so the loaf would be a little uncooked. Beer makers would then cut the loaves into little pieces which were placed in large vessels. Water or a sweet solution was added, like a date concentrate, and left for a period of time. After fermentation, the dough would be strained through baskets made out of date palm or doum palm, all in one large vessel. Finally, the liquid was poured into clay jugs or jars, and closed tightly, ready for consumption. Beer jugs were quite small in size, with perhaps a one-or two-liter capacity. Beer would be served in small clay cups and the beverage wasn't kept too long as it would turn acidic.

Barley.

Barley Beer

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

Loaf of barley bread
1 liter water
Lupine bean concentrate, to taste

Method

1. Soak bread in water for 1 day, strain, then place in sun for another day until it dries.
2. Soak bread once again in water for 5 hours. Strain. Store in warm place until it rises.
3. Add lupine bean concentrate for color and tart taste. Then serve.

Bouza

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

4 cups fresh wheat (green)
1 liter water
1/2 cup risen dough (yeast)
1 tbsp anise and fennel
1/2 cup honey, or to taste

Method

1. Soak fresh wheat in water. Place in a container and leave for 24 hours until wheat has softened and started to sprout.
2. Empty water and leave the wheat seeds to sprout longer by placing a piece of cotton on top of them and dampening it from time to time.
3. Spread the sprouted wheat, and leave to dry in direct sunlight for 2 days or more until completely dry.
4. Grind dry wheat and sieve through a metal strainer to separate the chaff.
5. Knead the wheat flour and add yeast in a deep clay bowl. Add anise and fennel and mix with a large spoon. Cover. Leave to rise.
6. Add boiling water, stirring until smooth. Cover. Leave overnight to rise.
7. At the end of the following day, sieve the mixture in a metal strainer to separate anise and fennel, and cover again until the following day.
8. The next day the drink will begin to sour. It can be sweetened with honey as desired.

Wine

The second most prevalent drink in ancient Egypt was wine made out of grape juice. There was also a wine made out of pomegranate, although the fruit was not introduced until the Eighteenth Dynasty. Another wine was made out of figs. Undoubtedly it was grape wine that was the most popular.

Grapes were planted as they are now in grapevines and on wooden arbors, and the harvest was carefully cultivated. Grape wine was a much-loved delicacy for the upper classes or on special occasions and in feasts. Winemaking started with grape picking, a process that was done very carefully to keep the

The first stage of making wine: a man picking grapes from an arbor. Wall painting, Tomb of Nakht, Theban West Bank.

fruit from spoiling. Then the fruit was sent in baskets to be pressed in a big stone basin around which stood two beams connected together by another beam from which ropes were suspended. Holding on to the ropes, the workers stomped on the grapes with their feet. After that, the juice was transferred to jugs. In an effort to preserve every precious drop, a piece of cloth was applied to the remaining mixture to absorb the juice, tied between two rods, and wrung out by and a group of strong men. They were usually helped by another person whose job was to collect the strained liquid in a basin placed under the cloth. After all the juice had been stored away in vessels, and probably after more straining or purification of the juice, the lids of the vessels were tightly shut and the mixture left to ferment until the wine was ready to drink.

Carob.

Beverages in Modern-day Upper Egypt and Nubia

Beer and wine are no longer popular drinks in Upper Egypt, but *bouza* (barley) is still offered on certain occasions although it is served before fermentation. Other drinks still popular include doum, carob, anise, cinnamon, and fenugreek.

Carob and Doum

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 cup honey
1 cup powdered carob or doum
1 liter water

Method

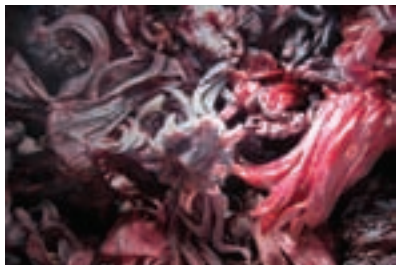
1. Bring honey to a boil, stirring constantly. Add carob or doum and stir.
2. Pour water and boil for 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
3. Soak carob or doum for 6 hours. Sieve and store in clean jugs. Serve.

Karkadeh or *'Ennab* (Hibiscus)

Serves 4

Ingredients

1/8 kg dry hibiscus leaves
1 liter water
1/2 cup honey



Hibiscus leaves.

Method

1. Wash hibiscus. Cover with water. Simmer for 5 minutes.
2. Soak in water for at least 1 hour, then sieve. Sweeten. Serve.

Note: Another way of making hibiscus is by soaking it in cold water for at least 2 hours, then sieving it. Made in this way, it is very effective as a home remedy for high blood pressure.

Tamarind

Serves 6

Ingredients

1/4 kg dried tamarind
1 1/2 liter water
1 cup molasses

Method

1. Wash tamarind, cover with water, and simmer for 5 minutes. Soak in water for 6 hours.
2. Strain first through a clean towel then again to get a pure amber-colored liquid.
3. Sweeten with honey. Serve.

Appendices

Food and Language

The hieroglyphs used by the ancients were numerous and pictorial: symbols of people, animals, tools and implements, as well as food items. The foods were not chosen randomly, but in fact were built on the importance of that symbol to the lives of the ancient Egyptians. Among the twenty-four letters of the ancient Egyptian alphabet, four are related to food: I was represented by a leaf of a plant. N was represented by water, the source of life. W was represented by a baby quail, one of the birds that were hunted. Quails are also migratory birds and so may have had special significance in certain times of the year. Finally, T was represented by a loaf of bread, the staple food.

Besides the monosyllabic letters of the alphabet there exist in ancient Egyptian hundreds of other symbols and signs as well as many others that hold no phonetic value but help specify meaning. Among these, there is a significant number of sounds, symbols, and signs that represent food and drink. A man sitting with his hand reaching toward his mouth as if eating referred to words like “hungry,” “drinks,” “eat,” and “think.” Other images that carried a wealth of information also included actions related to food preparation, like a man using a pestle, a man kneading, or an arm carrying

a jug. Among symbols related to food that referred to agriculture were the carob fruit and grapes hanging in an arbor.

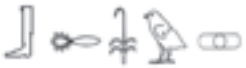
Animals, birds and fish were also represented as food-inspired symbols that carried wide-ranging meanings.

The ancient Egyptians delighted in producing the most intricate images of jugs of water, milk jugs, beer mugs, wine goblets, oil bottles, alabaster sinks, granite and stone basins, cups, tureens, even jug carriers and pot carriers.[51]

Food and Hieroglyphs in Ancient Egypt

Words Relating to Cooking and Dining

Bread

	ami	knead
	aḥ	kind of bread
	it	barley
	‘apret	bread mold
	‘amer	bakery
	‘ankhet	grain
	‘akek	kind of bread
	‘agwet	bruised wheat
	weshem	spike
	pat	offering bread
	bekhsu	kind of bread
	beset	kind of bread

	besha	bulgur
	paq	type of pastry
	pesen	bread offering
	feqa	kind of bread
	mesut	bread eaten at dinner
	neperi	ear of wheat
	nefer	seeds
	neqer	sieve
	nedj	crushing
	nedj	meal
	reteḫty	baker
	ḥesa	puff pastry
	khadju	type of pastry
	seky	flour
	shat	bread
	shedet	bread dough

	shebeb	knead
	qefen	kind of bread
	t	bread
	ta	oven
	t-ḥedj	white bread

Cooking methods and utensils

	asher	roasting
	ishet	meal
	‘akh	fire
	wenem	eating
	wenemet	food/fodder
	pesi	cook
	mynet	daily meals
	meḫet	plate
	mesyt	dinner
	niu	bowl

	remenet	cooking pot
	rehdet	jug/cauldron
	ḥemat	salt
	khet	fire
	sepet	sieve
	shebu	food
	qefen	bake
	tchet	table
	demet	knife
	djabet	charcoal

Beverages

	iareret	grapes
	iab	cup
	irep	wine
	irtet	milk
	‘a	cup

	‘afty	beer maker
	‘atekh	press
	‘atekhu	beer maker
	wesekh	cup
	weshemu	beer jug
	wedepu	waiter
	peru	kind of beer
	mu	water
	maher	milk jug
	ḥenqet	beer
	ḥenet	drinking vessel
	ḥeset	jug
	khentu	water pots
	sebi	drink
	qerḥet	jug
	kamu	vineyard plantation
	des	beer jug

Fruit, vegetables, and herbs

	iaqet	leek
	iudeneb	condiments
	waḥ	carob
	ibsa	mint
	bit	honey
	bity	beekeeper
	shen	tree
	baq	olive tree
	nebes	Ziziphus spina-christi (nabq)
	nehet	sycomore fig tree
	nedjem	carob tree
	renput	fruit
	ḥedjw	onion
	kheresh	bundle
	sam	wormwood
	shaw	coriander

	shewu	herb or gourd
	shespet	cucumber
	tepnen	cumin
	tepet	oil
	dabu	fig

Birds and fish

	abdju	species of fish
	inet	tilapia
	‘adu	mullet
	weḥa	fisherman
	menut	pigeon
	menet	sparrow
	meḫyt	fish
	niu	ostrich
	neshmet	scales
	r	species of goose

	rem	fish
	suḥet	egg
	ser	species of goose

Meat

	iua	ox
	iua	thigh of ox
	iuef	meat
	iḥ	ox
	iḥet	cow
	ankhet	goat
	ba	ram
	maḥedj	oryx
	nem	knife
	nemet	slaughterhouse
	reri	pig
	ser	sheep
	ka	bull

Hieroglyphs Relating to Food

Sealed oil jar

Sealed oil jar

Basin of alabaster

Bowl

Granite bowl

Granite bowl

Jug with handle

Cup

Cup

Cup

Ring-stand

Ring-stand

Earthenware pot

Beer jug

Jar with handles

Twin wine jugs

Earthenware pot

Beer jug

Jar with handles

Twin wine jugs

Tall water-pot

Water pouring from pot

Water pouring from pot

Water pots

Round loaf of bread

Bread

Bread

Roll of bread

Carob

Baking utensil

Roll of bread

Roll of bread

Tree

Conical loaf

Branch

Herb

Potter kiln

Pestle

Corn measure

Corn measure

Petrocephalus bane fish

Trussed goose

Duck

Piece of meat

Tilapia fish

Gray mullet fish

Nile puffer fish

Elephant-snout fish

Glossary

Abydos Situated in Sohag. 'Abdo' in ancient Egypt, the history of this city dates back to Predynastic times for it holds monuments inscribed with the names of the kings of Dynasty 0. In the Sixth Dynasty, King Pepy I built a temple for Osiris in Abydos. In the Middle Kingdom, an ancient Egyptian legend arose claiming that Osiris' tomb lay in the region, which made it even more famous. In the nineteenth century, Seti I and Ramesses II both constructed temples in the area.

Bastet Cat goddess. Main center of worship was in Basta, near Zagazig in the Delta. The goddess was represented by a cat or a woman with a cat's head.

bean sprouts Dry beans placed in water for 24 hours. The water is changed twice in the interim and then the beans are drained, put in a sieve, and covered with a damp cloth for 36 hours to sprout.

Bes Bes was pictured as a bowlegged dwarf wearing a lion's skin and with a gaping mouth from which his tongue lolled out. Bes had a thick beard, lop ears, and a tail. His duty was to protect infants and women at childbirth and also to provide entertainment and pleasure.

besara A dish made out of cracked, dried, and peeled beans flavored with cumin, dry coriander, and garlic. It has been popular since pharaonic times.

besarya A tiny, thin fish, invariably fried or salted in modern Egypt.

canon A kind of oven that is made by placing four bricks in a square on the ground and lighting wood inside. A casserole is placed on top directly and food then acquires a special taste because of the wood smoke.

celery Added to soups and fish casseroles, celery was believed by the ancients be an aphrodisiac, an analgesic, and a laxative. It was also valued as treatment for nervous disorders.

Deir al-Medina lies in the western part of Luxor between the Valley of the Queens and the Temple of Habu, and was a village for workmen who worked on the royal tombs.

douka A thin, flat type of bread similar to roqaq. Popular in modern-day Upper Egypt.

doum Doum fruit is also called wild palm. The sponge part of its fruit is eaten and made into a refreshing drink. The doum palm bears an egg-sized fruit, and was eaten often in ancient Egypt and offered to the gods. Its leaves were used in making slippers and sandals. Its flour was used in making a kind of bread.

fereek Wheat that is boiled and crushed then left in the sun to dry for a period of three days to a week.

Hapi The god in charge of the Nile flood that waters Egypt and brings bounty to its people. The ancient Egyptians pictured him as androgynous with breasts and a sagging stomach. Hapi was called by several names such as the 'giver of life,' the 'god of fish,' the 'god of sustenance,' the 'god of water,' the 'father of friends,' and the 'bringer of green.'

Horemheb The last of the Eighteenth Dynasty kings, Horemheb was continuously promoted until he became the highest leader in the Egyptian army during Tutankahmun's reign. Akhenaten was succeeded by King Ay whose untimely death caused Horemheb take the throne to keep peace in the land.

Jew's mallow Molokhiya, a leafy vegetable used to make a tasty dish. Sometimes the leaves are dried and can be stored for a long time.

kawyakawy A kind of pie in Nubia, which is slightly similar to *qatayef* (an oriental type of pancake) eaten today all over Egypt.

keshk Balls of uncooked green wheat mixed with sour milk and which have been dried in the sun.

Khasekhemwy The last of the Second Dynasty kings, he came to reign after a period of internal strife. He returned peace and security to the land. His grave lies near Abydos.

kosb The solid substance left over after oil is extracted from different seeds like sesame, corn, linen, and castor.

lotus A plant that grows in still waters and swamps. Its roots extend in the murky depths, and its wide leaves and flowers spread on the surface of the water. The flowers open up in the morning and close in the evening. Lotus was so common in ancient Egypt that it was used as a symbol alongside the papyrus plant and was often presented as an offering in temples and funerary rites.

lotus blossom Baskets of lotus blossom were found in Tutankhamen's tomb. It was also used to make bread.

mefraak A long, twisted handle that ends with a crescent or jagged-shaped blade. It is used by placing the blade in a pot with the boiled vegetables, and the handle is rubbed between open palms back and forth until the vegetables are shredded into a smooth texture.

Mena The first king of the First Dynasty and the king who united Upper and Lower Egypt. A slab was found in his name that is currently displayed at the Egyptian Museum, and set to commemorate his victories. On one side of the slab Mena is depicted wearing a white crown (the Crown of the South), and on the other side, a red crown (the Crown of the North). Around him are followers and rows of headless prisoners. He has been credited with the founding of Anb Hej, or the City of the White Wall, which was later known as Memphis, near the intersection of the Delta and Upper Egypt, and making it Egypt's capital during the First Dynasty.

Min One of the oldest gods known to ancient Egyptians, he was worshiped starting from the Pre-Dynastic era as the god of fertility. Min was pictured in the shape of a man with an erect phallus wearing a tight robe and a crown with two feathers. One of his arms is raised and holds a whip. The ancient Egyptians held celebrations in honor of Min in the seasons of harvest as thanks for a bountiful crop.

mudar Arabic word for "clay."

Naqada Naqada lies in Qena in the south of Egypt and holds many tombs dating as far back as the Stone Age. The culture has been divided into Naqada I and Naqada II. These civilizations are characterized by the refinement and skill displayed in the stone, bronze, clay, and ivory tools and statues it produced.

Nepri The ancient god of grain.

Nubia The name may have come from the word 'Noub' which means 'gold' in ancient Egyptian. Nubia was considered to begin at the First Cataract south of Egypt. The borders of Egypt in the First Dynasty reached the Second Cataract with King Djer. In the Middle Kingdom, Egyptian armies invaded the south of Nubia to the city of Samna, located south of the Second Cataract. In the Eighteenth Dynasty, during the reign of King Thutmose III, the Egyptians extended their borders south of the fourth waterfall. Toward the end of the

Modern Kingdom, the priests of Amun ruled Nubia. In the Twenty-third Dynasty, many of the Amun priests headed to Nubia to start a ruling house until one of them, Piankhy, managed to move with his army north, and founded the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. The Assyrians fought them when they entered Egypt, and they were defeated by Psamtik II. After that, ancient Egyptian influence declined in Nubia, being replaced by the Marawa kingdom.

offerings The ancient Egyptians believed that food and drink were needed in death as in life for people as well as for the gods, and so they took great care throughout religious and funerary rites to offer food to the gods and the deceased.

Philae Island Lying some three kilometers south of the Aswan Dam, Philae is home to several religious temples, the oldest of which was built in King Nectanebo I's reign (the Thirtieth Dynasty) and was dedicated to the worship of Isis and Hathor.

rehaaya Two heavy stones placed on top of each other. The top one would have a hole in the middle and would be used to grind grain to make flour for bread.

sycomore One of the oldest trees planted in Egypt, the sycomore was considered sacred by the ancient Egyptians and its figs were eaten. It was also used in medicinal recipes as a laxative and anti-inflammatory of the gums.

tadmees A method of cooking that entails cooking over low heat for a long period of time, perhaps four or five hours. It is most commonly used to cook legumes, especially beans and chickpeas.

Tell al-Amarna lies in al-Minya. Akhenaten founded Akhetaten (Aten's Horizon) as an alternative capital to the one in Thebes. The modern name goes back to a family that lived in the region, called Beni Omran. Some of the remains of the old city are still standing, and include houses, streets, some royal palaces, and a large temple.

Notes

1 Shukri, 1970.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ali, Vol. 3, 1988.
6 Shukri, 1970.
7 Ali, Vol. 1, 2004.
8 James, 2000.
9 Montet, 1997.
10 Spencer, 2000.
11 Montet, 1997.
12 Darby, Ghalioungui, and Grivetti, 1977. Also see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thyme
13 Montet, 1997.
14 Hassan, 1990.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Montet, 1997.
18 Ali, Vol. 1, 2004.
19 Nour El Din. 2007.
20 Ibid.

21 *Al-Zira'a al-misriya al-qadima*, 2004. Also see Zaki, 2006.
22 Montet, 1997.
23 Saleh, 1987.
24 For more on these ingredients, check http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_pepper
25 Fruit sugar or honey and salt were traditionally placed at the table for guests to help themselves, much as salt and pepper are today.
26 Erman, 1997.
27 Černy, 1987.
28 Al-Mahdy, 2009.
29 Hassan, 1992.
30 Erman, 1997.
31 Ibid. See p. 309 for more details.
32 *Mu'gam al-hadara al-misriya al-qadima,* 1996.
33 Spencer, 1987.
34 Darby, Ghalioungui, and Grivetti, 1977.
35 *al-Zira'a al-misriya al-qadima*, 2004.
36 Al-Mahdy, 2009.
37 Montet,1997.
38 Ali, 2004.
39 Al-Mahdy, 2009.
40 Grüß, 1932.
41 Montet, 1997.
42 *Daily Life in Ancient Egypt*, 1986.
43 Hassan, 1992. Also see *al-Zira'a al-misriya al-qadima*, 2004.
44 Darby, Ghalioungui, and Grivetti, 1977.
45 Ibid.
46 Froschauer and Römer, 2006.
47 Apicius is a Latin text that goes back to the first century BC and includes several Alexandrian recipes that emerged from the mixing of the pharaonic village of Rhakotis with the influx of Greek visitors. For more on the resulting heterogeneous community that embraced elements of both, see Froschauer and Römer, 2006.
48 Hassan, 1990.

49 Ibid. Also see Kamal, 1998.

50 Hassan, 1990. Also see Erman, 1997.

51 Nour El Din, Abd El Halim, 2004. Also see Gardiner, 1982, and Kamal, 2002.

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